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BY TALBOT GWYNNE



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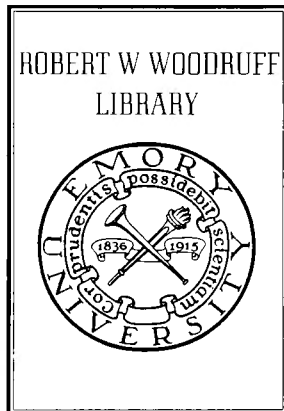
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# YOUNG SINGLETON.

BY

TALBOT GWYNNE.

AUTHOR OF

"NANETTE AND HER LOVERS," "SCHOOL FOR FATHERS," ETC. ETC.

**NEW EDITION.**

LONDON :

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# YOUNG SINGLETON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### APPARITIONS.

“Poor wretch ; thy guardian angel weeps !”—YOUNG.

ON a cold, rainy November afternoon, beside a briskly-burning fire, two old women sat taking their tea, with buttered toast accompaniment. The said tea and toast spread a pleasant odour about the room ; the fire cast a cozy ruddy light on a japan screen which stood behind the old dames, enclosing them and their round, one-legged, three-footed tea-table in a little room, cut off, as it were, from the large one in which they were sitting ; the purring of a sleek puss added to the pleasure and comfort of the moment.

Jenny Wood and Peggy Sykes, the two old persons in question, quaffed their tea and ate their toast beneath the roof of a great country house ; they and the cat being the only dwellers therein, with the exception of rats and mice, often heard, but seldom seen.

Jenny had sole charge of this abode. She had quartered herself in one of the wings, in a room on the ground floor ; a room with carved ceiling and carved panels ; lofty, well

proportioned ; and which received light through two high, narrow, small-paned windows.

In one corner of the chamber stood Jenny's bed : not a bed as " bed " is generally understood, but a gilt, crooked-legged sofa, made in Paris in the days of the Orleans Regent. This couch had once supported powdered beaux and belles, as they sat chatting belles-lettres and scandal ; it now gave rest by night to an English villager, old and poor. A neat patchwork quilt, laid over this bed, contrasted with the visible parts of the rich, but faded, green brocade wherewith it was covered. A marquetrie escrutoire served Jenny as drawers ; the upper part and pigeon-holes being by her used as a *dépôt* for tea, sugar, coffee, and butter. If *billets-doux* have ghosts, how the shades of departed love-letters must have crumpled and rustled at beholding their former nooks thus desecrated !

A few chairs, some in the Louis XV. style, others high-backed and carved, completed the furniture of the room. A girandole, no longer lighting company and festivals, but dusky through age and dirt, still hung from the ceiling ; and Jenny had knocked a few huge nails into the gilt panels, whereon to hang her scarlet cloak and black bonnet ; besides a vast work-bag, and a sack holding her best Sunday suit.

Peggy had stepped in from her cot a mile distant, just to cheer Jenny's solitude ; and there they sat, alternately blowing and imbibing the tea in their saucers ; slowly munching the well-buttered, salt-sprinkled toast, whilst they talked village gossip, besides other, to them, interesting matters.

Peggy cast a glance at the tall trees before the windows, and pouring a fresh supply of tea into her saucer, shuddered as she said : " I do wonder how 'ee can live here all alone ; that I do now ! "

“ Ah ! ’tis uncommon ‘unkel’ to be sure ; but la ! there, one must get a livelihood somehows ; and ’tain’t much trouble to open and shut blinds and shutters, and dust the old things about the place now and again.”

“ No, sure ’tain’t ! ” returned Peggy, wagging her head ; “ and the weather can’t get at ’ee here, as it does in my old tumble-down cottage ; but then there’s them nasty ghosts : so ’tis as broad as it’s long.”

“ I don’t hear nothing of ’em at this end of the house,” said Jenny, and her merry blue eyes looked grave, and she dropped her chirping voice. “ ’Twas quite another thing at t’ other end ; for there, it’s as true as I sits here, I did hear comical noises ; and seed a face I hope never to look on again, that I certainly did.”

“ Lor ! do ’ee look here ! Here be a stranger as sure as my name’s Sykes,” interrupted Peggy, holding up a long stalk of tea-plant. “ It be a man, and he comes to-day,” she continued, after duly inspecting the stalk ; then laying it aside, she said, “ I wonder you ever got over it, that I do.”

“ ’Twas on a fine summer’s night, the first night I comed here ; mind I tells ’ee the truth, every word on it ; I tells ’ee no lie : ’twas as fine a night as ever followed a fine day. I shut up the old place at dusk after I’d got my supper ; and so, when I’d seen all safe, I ondressed and went to bed. I don’t suppose I a’ been abed but a few hours, when I woke up all of a sudden, scared like. The rushlight was a burning quite steady, and I seed nothing then ; but, bless ’ee, I heard in the room overhead a noise of folks coming and going, hurried like ; and then came shrill cries, like the cries of a woman in labour : it made my blood run cold to hear them. Then there came a silence ; then the painful cries, and the noise of the footsteps, over and over again, maybe for an hour and more. I sat up in bed sweating, and trembling, and hiding my



eyes ; and the owls hooted and screeched ; and that and the other sounds, and being all alone, drove me well nigh crazy—that it did. Well ! after a bit, such cries I heard, oh, Lord ! they rent my very heart ; I can't think of 'em now without quaking. Then I heard nothing more but the singing of the gnats and crickets, till there seemed to be the weak crying of a little babe. I fell to sobbing and sighing, and hid my face beneath the quilt. I'd locked the door afore I went to bed ; but, if you'll believe me, I heard it slowly open. I shook ready to break the bed down, but I started up in spite of myself like ; and there I see—it's as true as I'm a living soul—a fire burning in the great chimney ; and coming from the door a hard-favoured large man, the very image of him in the picture I showed 'ee upstairs : him with the square-toed boots and the peaked beard ; him as they say built the house. His face was as pale as death, and his eyes looked all glazed and bloodshot. I couldn't help staring at 'un, but he didn't seem to see me. I noticed his mouth drawn and half-open like a corpse's, and his long black hair hanging down each side his white face. In his hands he carried a little, naked, new-born baby ; and when he come up to the fire, he put the poor innocent little creature on it, and jammed it down with his heel. The baby cried so piteous-like, and writhed about till it fell off the fire on to the hearth ; then the cruel man seized it, and hit its poor little head agin the chimney, where I showed 'ee the mark of blood as they can't get off the white marble. He put it on the flames again and held it down with his foot. I tried to jump out o' bed to save the innocent baby, but I couldn't move, and so fell into a swoon. When I come to myself, there was the sun shining in through the hole in the shutter, and the little birds whistling outside ; and when I come to think of the night afore, it all seemed a dream. However, I moved here that

very day, to get as far as ever I could from that room ; and I've never heard nothing since."

Peggy, although she had listened to the above story a hundred times, was never tired of hearing it again. Her gray eyes opened wide ; and her little amiable, puckered visage gave signs of horror, gratifying to the teller of the tale.

"And what do 'ee think it was ?" she inquired ; well knowing what the pleasing answer would be.

"Why, they *do* say he as built the place murdered a baby. It be a shocking tale altogether : the poor lady died, and no one ever knew where they buried her, nor the child neither ; and they say the owners of the house will always be unlucky, because it's built where a church stood. I can't say if that be true ; but sure enough old Squire Singleton, master's father, broke his neck out hunting—I remember that ; and *his* father again died out of his mind, because he shot his brother by mistake for a robber ; and *their* father was obliged to go to foreign parts, and hide about, because he was found out in a forgery : they *do* say so. I recollect when I was a girl, and they was digging to begin the new stables, they chanced on a stone coffin, like a horse-trough. They didn't ought to have opened it, but the old Squire made 'em, and I seed it ; and there, sure enough, was the body of a man they said was a bishop, with a pointed cap on his head, and a kind of goold sheep-hook beside him—la ! his things hung in rags about his poor legs as was but bones ; and there was rings on his skeleton fingers : the Squire took they, and give 'em to his lady, and the cap and sheep-hook to our parson. The bones fell to dust when they touched 'em—so did the clothes, bless 'ee ; but Dr. Watts took the skull and the jaw, as had fell off on to the poor creature's breast ; and the coffin's where I showed 'ee, under the pump for a stone trough. Squire said it didn't si'nify, because it was a *papistis* body, and

they bain't for freedom and church and state ; but I don't see how them as disturbs the dead can come to good : that I certainly can't."

By this time the shades of night were fast gathering around. Jenny stirred the fire ; whilst Peggy reflected on her friend's words, as though she had never before heard them, or entertained the ideas they brought to her mind.

Pleasingly horrible and exciting those ideas were.

The two old women sighed over them, shook their heads, and cried "La !" and "Bless 'ee," in a variety of tones, when suddenly they shrieked, started up, and seized each other's hands.

A loud peal from the door bell rang long and echoing through the house : Jenny gasped ; mechanically put the kettle on ; and then asked Peggy what was to be done.

The old ladies could come to no decision ; when a second peal, louder than the first, set them trembling, yet trotting towards the hall.

Jenny put up a heavy chain, and then slowly opened the hall door, only to bang it to with a loud scream.

"The old devil !" she cried, in answer to Peggy's inquiry as to what was the matter : "he's out there, as black as a boot ! This is all along of disturbing the dead, and building where churches stood. Lor, ever a daisy ! what'll become of us !"

"It's the stranger I found in my tea !" whispered Peggy ; her toothless jaws chattering.

"Nonsense ! it's the old devil I tell 'ee !" returned Jenny, clasping her hands.

A knock against the door, followed by words, uttered in a harsh drawling tone, and a strange accent, brought the old women, screaming, on their knees.

The bell was set in motion for the third time, accompanied by knocking, as though from a heavy stick. The same

drawling voice again uttered words the two old persons could not make out; and to which they made answer by a volley of screams, and so much of the Belief as they could, in their terror, call to mind.

A second voice was now heard, speaking to the following effect: "I say! how long are you going to keep us here in the rain: and what are you screaming for, like so many pigs in a gate? Open the door, Jenny Wood, and leave off your Merry-Andrew's tricks, old girl. Come, look sharp!"

"That do sound very like the voice of old Neddy, the postboy at the Duck," cried Peggy.

Jenny shook her head, as she replied in a whisper:

"The sly ways of Belzebub, Peggy! He can take any shape or voice he's a mind to, bless 'ee!" Then raising her voice to a shaking treble, she thus addressed the being, or beings, without: "There, get 'ee gone, get 'ee gone; I bain't a going to let in the old devil and his little imps, I can tell 'ee!"

"There's no devil here, Jenny: why you must be mad or drunk, for certain!"

"Don't 'ee tell me, I knows better. Lod-a-mussy on us! Why I seed un when I looked out, with his deedy black eyes and his great comical hat. He'd shaggy stuff a growing under his nose, and no neckcloth on this cold evening."

A loud laugh from without followed this speech of Jenny's; she, after much ado, being prevailed upon, Peggy holding her tight by the gown the while, once more to open the door a little way, and to peep out.

On doing so, Jenny beheld nought to alarm her. The saddle-coloured face and red-rimmed eyes of old Neddy, the postboy at the Duck, met her gaze; but there was neither devil nor imp to be seen.

A yellow post-chaise, with the rattling glasses up and



quiet, stood before the door—looking, on that wet evening, as miserable as post-chaises were wont to do under such circumstances.

“Now, then—

‘Open locks,  
Whoever knocks!’

as the old man in the play says; and let us in, will ’ee!” cried Neddy; as his bandy legs, waddling along under his long white greatcoat, carried him to the chaise door. Having opened it, he plunged his arms and shoulders into the carriage, and drew therefrom a something wrapped up carefully in a horse-cloth. He shouldered it; trotted up the steps with it; set it down in the hall, steadying it with both hands, and calling out—

“Now, then, old tar-brush, you’re wanting!”

So saying, Neddy withdrew his hands from the bundle; which, having rocked and tottered as he did so, fell to the ground. A pettish infantine voice, proceeding from the folds of the horse-cloth, sounded through the hall, calling “Mahomet, Mahomet;” adding words which none of the Britons there present understood.

From the dusk and wet without, stepped into the house the being who had so terrified old Jenny Wood. On again beholding him she started and screamed, as she did Peggy, who now saw that strange-looking man for the first time. The shrieks of the old women, the crying and wailing from the horse-cloth, together with the loud laughing and stamping of Neddy from the Duck, caused the great stone hall to ring again.

“Well! after all I’m not astonished at your taking un for old Scratch. Shouldn’t wonder, now, if they was as like as two peas!” cried the postboy, eyeing the dark man, as he unfolded the rug and drew therefrom a little, thin, black-eyed, weeping boy, arrayed in pea-green “skeletons,” em-

broidered in silver, and decked with richly wrought silver buttons.

Be it known to such young persons as may not be aware of the fact, and who may never have seen such things, that "skeletons" consisted of a long straight jacket, having a row of buttons all round the waist, to which were buttoned a pair of trowsers; forming a very easily put on and comfortable, though not elegant, costume. Little boys wore this garb at the end of the latter, and beginning of the present century.

On beholding the little pea-green apparition, Jenny clapped her trembling hands together, exclaiming, "Lor' ever a daisy!" whilst Peggy stood wrapt in admiring astonishment.

"He be a pretty creetur, he be!" cried Jenny; "but Lor! there—whatever do he do here? Who *be* you, my dear?"

"What! haven't you heard?" said Neddy, raising his hat and scratching his bald head: "Didn't you get a letter, nor nothing?"

"Not a word."

"Well, I heard about it from Lawyer Small. 'Twas he as ordered the shay and first turn out, and told me where to drive to; and bid me tell 'ee he'd be over here in the morning."

"Don't 'ee cry so, my dear," said Jenny in a soothing tone of voice to the little boy, who had got hold of the tawny man's hand, whilst he rubbed his little head against his arm. "Who be un, Neddy?"

"Why that be the Squire's little boy, just come over from the *Indjies*; and that other un be the blackamoor that brought him. They're both as cold as apes in a snow-storm; so you'd better get 'em something hot, and put 'em to bed. You'll see Mr. Small to-morrow; and I was to be sure and say you was to take great care of 'em. Wish you good evening, dame!"

So saying, Neddy left the house, perched himself on the bar in front of the post-chaise, and drove rattling and jingling away down the weed-covered drive.

The two women, with the two dark strangers, adjourned to Jenny's room. Jenny placed a small wooden stool close to the fire as a seat for the little gentleman in pea-green; she then bade the man make himself quite at home, and began bustling about with a view to preparing supper for her guests. Master Richard Singleton suddenly found a large slice of home-made plum-cake in his cold hand: it had been placed there by Jenny, who at the same time tenderly stroked his smooth black hair, saying:

"There, my dear, eat that to stay your poor little stomach; and don't 'ee take on so: we'll make 'ee as happy as a king, that we will, bless 'ee!"

Peggy having volunteered to stay with her friend till the next day, trotted about, taking part in Jenny's arrangements.

In the first place, slices of bacon, fair to the view, were set frying; a cloth was placed on the round table; bread was cut from a new loaf; and a bottle of elder wine was brought forth; the said wine to be duly warmed and spiced, in order to thaw and cherish the shivering man and boy. All being ready, and the table being placed as close as possible to the fire, Jenny seated Richard beside it on a high-backed chair, smiling on him, and speaking to him in a pleasant cheerful voice.

"Please to be seated, sir!" she said, or rather shrieked to Mahomet; for, as she did not well understand his English, nor he hers, she hit on the plan of shrieking at him as though he were deaf, thinking thereby to make herself understood. "Please to be seated, sir; and I hope you'll find supper to your liking: 'tis but a poor un in my humble way; I wish I could give you and the young gentleman a better, bless 'ee!"

Mahomet drawled out something, whereupon Jenny made a little bob-curtsey and nodded, but understood not.

This Mahomet was a small, supple, well-made East Indian, fine in feature and delicate of hand and foot. Peggy had remarked in a whisper to Jenny that his hand was not "one morsel like a man's, but for all the world like the little baboon's we see afore the show-booth at Michaelmas fair." It certainly was very small and dark, and far different from the hard-worked hands Peggy had been accustomed to behold.

Mahomet's eyes were small and fiery, generally hidden beneath the lids; but when these were raised, and he chanced to look full on any person or thing, they had the cunning gaze and red tinge of a snake's.

His moustache was scant and harsh, and his long hair hung curlless from beneath his cap.

He wore a blue cloth tunic reaching a little below his knees, tight across the breast, and open on each side, showing the red lining. To this were added loose red trowsers, and a pair of shoes turned up at the toes. His cap was a kind of flat red and gold turban, the folds being placed like the coil of a serpent; on the band shone a gold dagger, the crest of the Singletons.

The little boy he watched over, although not so dark as Mahomet, was far darker than children of pure European blood. His eyes were so large as to seem out of all proportion to his face. Jenny pronounced them to be like those of "Lady Fotheringay's little white span'el at the Court."

Supper did not go off so smoothly as Jenny could have wished.

Mahomet, to be sure, ate with good appetite. He was a renegade, calling himself a Christian; wherefore the eating of meat and the drinking of wine pained not his Indian conscience, and he acquitted himself well at the little round supper-table.



Master Singleton had munched his cake to the last plum with great satisfaction; but when he came to the fried bacon, which would have rejoiced the heart of a country boy of his years, he began to pout, and next he began to cry; winding up by throwing the bacon on the floor, speaking as fast as he could in Hindostanee, and belabouring the table with his little dark fists.

Jenny, who was hanging a pair of coarse, neatly patched sheets to air, looked round on hearing this baby hurricane.

“Lor’ ever a daisy!” she cried, running to his side; “whatever’s the matter with the little creetur? Does anything hurt ’ee, my dear?”

“I hate that nasty meat! I want curry; I want mangoes. I want to go to India; I want papa: I won’t stay here! Give me curry; give me mangoes, you nasty things!”

So spake Master Singleton, as rapidly as possible.

Mahomet slowly grated out a string of odd-sounding words, fixed his snake’s eyes on the boy, tapped the table with his knife, stamped sharply with his foot, and the next instant Richard was sitting sobbing on the wooden stool before the fire, Jenny furnishing him with another slice of cake, and Peggy, giving him a glass of hot elder wine, nicely spiced, of which she encouraged him to drink.

By degrees he subsided into the heaving of sobs as he ate his cake, and took the warm, comforting potion; whilst Mahomet sat himself down on the floor to smoke, and so to fill the old room with the fragrance of Eastern tobacco.

Meanwhile the old women removed the table, rolled Jenny’s sofa before the screen, decked it with the clean sheets, and announced it to be ready to receive Master Singleton, who was beginning to nod before the fire.

Mahomet lazily unpacked a small Chinese trunk, the only luggage yet arrived. He then arrayed the little boy for the

night; the bed was warmed, Master Singleton tucked up therein, to fall asleep in an instant, whilst his entertainer was blessing his "little blackamoor heart!" and spreading her thick, warm, scarlet cloak over him.

Mahomet stretched himself to rest upon the hearth: Jenny and her old friend having lighted a fire in the next room, retired there to doze in large chairs, breaking the length of the night with a cup of tea, and a little whispered conversation on the subject of Richard and his absent father.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE SINGLETONS.

THE Singletons were what is usually called "an unfortunate family;" but whether this arose from the possession of church spoils, from misconduct, from folly, or from imprudence, readers will be pleased to decide according to the bent of their several minds.

The first of the family on record was a wealthy clothier in the days of Charles the First, the very man mentioned by Jenny Wood as the being who built Singleton Hall, and whose ghost she affirmed to have seen; the man whose portrait, with the square-toed boots and pointed beard, hung in the dining-room among those of his descendants.

His son had made a sad hole in the money the first Singleton had brought together. In the days of Charles the Second it flew on airy wings into all sorts of unworthy pockets.

Then, again, the Singleton who next inherited partook of Singleton the First's turn of mind. He patched and

repaired his father's devastations: and thus Singleton followed Singleton—some to spend and some to save—until the property descended to James Singleton, father to the little boy who, on the old “Régence” sofa, was sleeping beneath the roof of his ancestors.

James Singleton's father being most deplorably out at elbows, as the phrase goes, was fain to send James, at an early age, to India, there to “shake the Pagoda tree”—those being the good days in which people in the East were much employed in shaking that same tree, and in bringing down showers of gold on their wealth-seeking heads.

James Singleton shook the tree with vigorous arm and with good will, causing the fruit to come down thick as crisp brown leaves in autumn. What use he made of it was unknown in England; though all the dwellers about Singleton Hall expected one day to see him come home a Nabob, in semblance like unto the sign of the Saracen's Head, riding in a castle on elephant-back, with a negro military band clashing cymbals and banging long drums around him.

We will now leave him, and return to his son.

Betimes, on the morning after the little boy's arrival at Singleton Hall, Mr. Small, the lawyer, trotted up to the door.

“Yoicks! Tallyho! Hallo there! any one at home?” shouted the lawyer, cracking a long hunting whip.

No answer being given to this alarum, Mr. Small pealed at the bell, continuing to ring, to “yoicks,” and to “tallyho,” till Jenny opened the door.

“Well, dame, how be you?” he cried, mimicking Jenny's speech, and making a bob-curtsey. “Lor-ever-a-daisy! I thought you were all dead, bless 'ee! How's little blackey? I say, who's to hold my horse? Stop a bit; I'll tie him up. Now, Mandamus, you keep quiet like a good nag, and you shall go hunting to-morrow. Fire away, dame, and I'll follow you!”

Mr. Small, the lawyer, was a little, fat, round man, about forty; red-faced, beetle-browed, and plethoric. He had a hard, red, double chin; small blood-shot hazel eyes; a large, thick, horny mouth; a head of stubby hair, two inches of neck, and a ton of stomach.

Mr. Small possessed great sharpness of mind, and great knowledge of business; he saw through a case as readily as any man; but he hid all his natural and law talents beneath a cloak of boisterous manner, which had thrown many an one off his guard, and oftentimes proved of vast service to Lawyer Small.

The round person of this man of law was arrayed in black coat, gray breeches, and top boots. A yellow shirt-frill, supporting many a grain of snuff, hung limp upon his breast. A short pig-tail graced his poll: a pig-tail exactly representing the tail from whence it drew its name; an appendage which whisked briskly from right to left, from left to right, as the wearer sharply moved his head, and which vibrated stiffly when he loudly laughed.

“Well! my little ink-horn, how are you? How’s papa? Very sick at sea, eh? Nice climate this for an Indian! You’ll have chilblains sprouting all over you: swell up your eyes, and make a blind kitten of you. Something like one in the face, by gad! Here, I’ve got a letter from papa all about you! Ah, Lucifer! didn’t see *you*: enough to frighten the very crows! Bad hat, that of yours, for hunting. I suppose you hunt on an elephant, don’t you? Pack of cheetahs—in at the death—get tiger’s tail, tiger’s pads! Look here, Jenny! You’re to have something extra to look after Master Singleton. Bed and bedding ordered—coming up this afternoon—mind and air ’em well. Which room, eh? Not ghost-shop—frighten him—make his hair stand on end—never come down again. Leave it to you, dame! Bad suit that pea-green one! Send tailor

—measure him—ditto blues for winter—French gray and nankeens for summer—something of that sort, eh? Leave it to tailor. Got an allowance for him. Black fellow goes back in the spring. Feed 'em well, and keep 'em warm. If they're sick, send for Blenkins. Barrel o' beer and dozen o' port be here this morning. That's all, I believe. Five-pound note to begin with. Anything to say? Look after yourselves, and devil take the hindmost; for *that* won't be a lawyer. Ta! ta!"

So saying, Mr. Small vanished, banging the doors, and loudly singing concerning the "bold Dragoon" and his "ancient Fair."

"And he was like a mile in length,  
And she like a mile-stone!  
With his long sword, saddle, bridle  
Whack! faddy-bow-wow!  
Fol-de-rol-de-ray!"

Jenny made choice of an airy upper room with a south aspect, and therein the beds for Master Singleton and Mahomet were put up.

They had a pleasant sitting-room likewise, and the run of the house.

Singleton Hall was not a neglected tumble-down abode. The owner, or rather Lawyer Small, his agent, saw that it was kept in sound repair, and that fires from time to time were lighted to keep off the damp.

As winter came on—steady, stern, and frosty—poor little Singleton, in spite of his "ditto blues," felt it severely. The chilblains, prophesied by Mr. Small, made their appearance. Cold caused Richard to sit shivering close beside a good fire; whilst a fit of infantine spleen, a sort of *mal de pays*, weighed down his spirits.

"I want to go to India—I want to go to India. Take me home! Take me home!" he would sob out, in such

melancholy accents that tender-hearted old Jenny would take him on her knees, and, swallowing her tears, sing to him, and tell him old tales in order to divert him from his sadness.

She bought him a trap, bat, and ball, together with battledores and shuttle-cock; lighted a fire in the huge dining-room, and set him and Mahomet to play; but Mahomet was so lazy, languid, and chilly, that the old woman was fain to play herself, which, in spite of stiffness of limb, she did as merrily as a child.

As for Mahomet, he lay smoking before the fire; his Eastern dress covered by a gray shepherd-coat and cape; his flat turban replaced by a fur cap. He spoke but little, and never smiled.

From time to time he reproved Master Singleton, hardly taking the amber mouthpiece of his pipe from beneath his moustache as he grated out his words; anon relapsing into a dreamy dozing state.

To judge from the expression of his face, his meditations could have had nothing of an angelic nature about them. He looked doggedly cruel, with a dash of scorn and defiance, lightly veiled over by a smooth unnatural air about his long thin lips—lips which his scanty moustache left fully visible.

Jenny did not take note of these things: but she disliked Mahomet: why, she could not tell, but so it was; and she looked forward to his departure in the spring with much the same feelings as one would entertain on hoping to see a viper wriggle out of a room into which he might have crawled.

By degrees little Richard fell entirely to her care; and hard work the good-natured old woman had with him.

The poor boy had been deplorably spoilt; the least contradiction threw him into a paroxysm of roaring and stamping; at such times, Mahomet would fling him a sweetmeat, abusing him slowly all the while.

He still cried for mangoes, for curry, and various other high-seasoned dishes. His dark attendant had, on first arriving, prepared them for him ; but when Mahomet subsided into the shepherd's coat and fur cap, he gave up cooking, and handed all his spices over to Jenny, who could never succeed in pleasing Master Singleton's morbid appetite.

"La! *drat* the child!" she would say, laughing, yet vexed; "what'll he want next? You didn't ought to take them hot things, my dear: don't 'ee now! They'll make you old afore you're young: every grain of that red pepper you eats is a nail in your coffin, bless 'ee! La! you'll never grow, my dear, if you goes on so; you'll be a little dwarf, like him I see at the fair."

Master Singleton felt a vague terror at the idea of being a dwarf; the visionary nails in his coffin, too, gave him a sensation of awe; yet all this did not prevent him from eating his hot dishes; nor from drubbing Jenny's long wooden-looking back whenever they were not cooked to his entire satisfaction.

Richard was very small for his age; looking but five years old, although he was seven. He knew nothing, not so much as A B C; in short, a more ignorant miserable little personage than Master Richard Singleton could not well be imagined.

It was in vain that Jenny tried to put a little childish gaiety into him, making a child of herself to bring it about.

She would seize his hands in order to make him dance; singing as she did so, in a clear lively voice—

"Dance and sing, gay as a lark!

Dance and sing, gay as a lark!"

"Don't!" Master Richard would cry: "let me go! I hate you! Leave me alone! I won't dance! I hate to be as gay as a lark! What is a lark? Oh, my chilblains! rub my chilblains!"

And so Jenny would set him on her knees, and rub his feet and hands before the fire; then singing a soothing ditty in low tones, would lull him off into a pleasant sleep, and a forgetfulness of his young woes.

Lack of company, the snow, frost, and roaring winds, rendered Mahomet so morose and melancholy, that little Richard left him to doze and smoke alone, whilst he sought Jenny's room and Jenny's company, passing most of his time sitting on the little wooden stool before her comfortable fire.

Great was Master Singleton's astonishment at the first fall of snow he beheld; and sorely puzzled was he when Jenny, on seeing the soft, large, swiftly falling flakes, told him to look out at the "old women picking geese!"

Winter was not destined to pass away without a visit from Mr. Blenkins to Singleton Hall.

Old Jenny Wood was one day alarmed by Richard's flushed face and violent shivering. In answer to her questions concerning his feelings, he said languidly—

"Head aches, and I hate everything: I hate you; I hate Mahomet. Give me some cake—I *will* have some cake! Keep me warm. I want to go to India. I *will* go; I hate this nasty place. Oh! I'm so cold, and I feel so sick. Put your red cloak on me, old Jenny! I *will* sit by the fire in your red cloak!"

Jenny draped him in her best cloak, and furnished him with the cake, being sure that he felt too sick to touch it: then rousing up Mahomet, she bade him go and watch Richard whilst she went for the doctor.

After having arrayed herself for her walk, and mounted herself on a high pair of patterns, she told poor little Singleton she should soon be back; he vehemently declaring that he hated Mahomet, and would not be left alone with him; Mahomet heeding him not, being, mentally, hundreds of miles off, assisting at some bygone scene of unholiness.



"La! drat it, Mr. *Maymet*!" shouted Jenny, "if you bain't off asleep again. I never see such a man. Do 'ee wake up now, and mind the child a bit whilst I'm gone for Dr. Blenkins. I do believe the little crectur might tumble into the fire and burn his head to a cinder, and you not a bit the wiser. Do 'ee wake up, Mr. *Maymet*, and just pinch yourself now and again to keep your eyes open till I come back."

Mahomet having promised to do his duty, Jenny departed on her tramp over the snow, leaving an odd-looking couple of human beings beside her fire; the Indian crouched down in his gray coat and fur cap; the little boy sitting on his wooden stool, habited in Jenny's scarlet cloak, his head decked with a blue handkerchief, which he had twisted round it in the form of a turban.

It was not long after her return from the town before the sonorous door-bell gave notice of the doctor's arrival.

He came accompanied by Mr. Small, who had brought him in his gig; having business at the hall.

"Come in, doctor! How do, dame!" might have been heard all over the house from the lawyer's strong lungs. "This way, sir! Here's your patient. Kill or cure, eh! Comical dog! Hallo! madhouse, I think. Looks like it. Ever see two such quizzes? Devil turned shepherd—black sheep—brimstone mutton! Little scarlet lady of Babylon, seated on a three-legged stool. Well, my little man, what's the matter with *you*. Here's Mr. Blenkins—soon put you on your legs again—eh, doctor? Pill, black dose—when taken to be well shaken. Warm your hands before you feel his pulse. Don't let his tongue frighten you: those fellows' tongues are always black and round like a parrot's? What have you been doing to him, dame? He looks as if he had been buried and dug up again. Shan't be long, doctor—just going to look round and see a man or

two—pick you up—tool you home. Couldn't you make it convenient to dine with us? Roast *sperrib* of pork, off the farm here—plum-pudding—so forth—bottle o' port—walnuts—good fire—easy chairs—friendly chat, and a good snooze." (Exit Mr. Small.)

Whilst this tornado had been going on, Mr. Blenkins had sedately placed his broad-brimmed hat on a chair; had slowly hung his gloves over the said broad brim; had calmly warmed his hands; had gently felt the little boy's pulse, looked at his tongue, and drawn down his under eyelid to inspect the colour of the eye-ball.

When Mr. Small had left the room, the doctor asked a few questions, stood with his back to the fire, and slowly rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"What has he been eating?" asked Mr. Blenkins, after a pause.

This opportunity was not to be lost. Jenny gave a long account of Master Singleton's food, showing the doctor the various bottles of hot things on which he battered.

"You mustn't let him have any more," said Mr. Blenkins.

On hearing these words Richard went off into one of his paroxysms; told the doctor he hated him; and, dashing at him, proceeded to kick him, the scarlet cloak flying about in an agitated and passionate manner the while.

"Come, come, sir! this'll never do. I shall put you into a strait-waistcoat," said the doctor firmly; and taking little Singleton by the arm, gave him a grip such as he had never felt before; together with a look that quelled him.

"He's got a fit of the jaundice, dame. Put him to bed. I'll send him something, and look in to-morrow."

So saying, Mr. Blenkins went in quest of Mr. Small; and Master Singleton was conveyed to his bed.

Mr. Blenkins, head "practitioner" of Warton, a bachelor, was a little, thin, smart man, about the same age as

Mr. Small; but, owing to a certain primness of air, looking some ten years older.

Mr. Blenkins was a model of neatness; the smallest piece of flue would not have dared to settle on his black garments. His hair was dressed and powdered with the greatest precision. Like his neighbour Small, he, too, wore a pigtail, or, more properly speaking, a "*queue*:" it would have been an insult to have put the word "pig" before so respectable a tail. Mr. Blenkins' queue did not whisk about like Mr. Small's pigtail; there was a sedate air about it; an air of repose and prudence: the doctor *was* a very prudent man, and his queue did not belie him.

He ever arrayed himself in black coat and breeches, and white waistcoat; his shirt frill was immaculate; and let Winter do his worst, Mr. Blenkins never put boot or gaiter over his smart black silk stockings. Mr. Blenkins had a good leg and foot, and well he knew it.

He was wont, however, in cold or bad weather, to button himself up in a very long white coat, reaching to his ancles, and this he wore on the present occasion.

Mr. Blenkins' features were good: prudence and caution were stamped on one and all of them; and about the nose there was a something which said that Mr. Blenkins loved money, well-looking nose though it was.

Old Jenny Wood, having no talent for scolding, found it a hard matter to make Master Singleton take his remedies. She coaxed him with sugar and oranges—all to no purpose.

It chanced that one day, when he was at the height of rebellion, Mr. Blenkins walked noiselessly into his room, heard Jenny in soft wheedling tones imploring him to take a most Stygian-looking mixture out of a tea-cup, and heard the patient squeakingly vow that he would not; that he hated doses, hated her, hated "nasty Doctor Blenkins," and that he *would* die, and then they would all be sorry.

Mr. Blenkins walked up to the bedside with folded arms and solemn mien ; fixed his eyes steadily on Master Singleton's huge black orbs ; nodded his head once at his patient, and once at the tea-cup ; then, with calm voice and great meaning, said to gasping little Richard, " Now, sir."

The boy jumped up in bed ; Jenny charged briskly with the tea-cup ; the affair was over in an instant.

" Whenever he's troublesome, dame, you send for *me* !" said the doctor, winking significantly and slowly.

" Ah ! *that* I will, sir ! " returned Jenny, taking the hint. " You may depend on it I will ; but la ! there, I hope he'll be good now, little creetur."

Old Jenny, acting on Mr. Blenkins' words, turned him into a bogie, wherewith to terrify Master Singleton ; who, before he had recovered from his illness, viewed his doctor with a kind of supernatural horror : his very queue had in Richard's eyes a spectral appearance ; his slow, solemn manner gave him a nervous panic, and his cold voice set his heart beating.

In consequence of these feelings on the part of Master Singleton, the managing him became an easier task to Jenny than it had hitherto been.

" I'll send for Dr. Blenkins as sure as you're a boy ! " — " Lor' love 'ee ! here's Dr. Blenkins a coming ; he'll draw all your teeth, and fill up the holes with wooden pegs ! " — " Dr. Blenkins 'll have 'ee, and shut 'ee up in his cupboard with the *skilleton* !" and such like menaces, would make Master Singleton jump at once from the character of a naughty boy admirably acted, to that of a good boy but tolerably performed.

The doctor himself played into Jenny's hands most ably ; he, moreover, reformed his diet, much to Richard's disgust, who said tremblingly, and to himself, " I hate you—you nasty, stupid old doctor ! " as a kind of reply to Mr. Blen-

kins' observation to Jenny, "Don't *you* let him have his way, dame, and we shall make a man of him yet."

In his father's home Richard had been a kind of toy : a sort of tame monkey or talking parrot ; allowed to run wild, and to do just as he thought fit, provided he amused his parent, and made him and his numerous guests laugh. He was had in at "tiffin" to show what "a little fire-eater" he was ; calmly swallowing the hottest viands, and then looking round for applause ; whilst Mr. Singleton gloried in his prowess, and his numerous sycophants over-applauded the performance.

Richard was suffered to pinch, bite, and scratch the native servants, as well as to kick the shins of his papa's little court ; Mr. Singleton being surrounded by a horde of flatterers, all more or less needy, and more or less in want of his patronage.

"Have 'ee got a mamma, my dear ?" Jenny once asked of him on his first arrival.

"No ; I never had one !" was the reply.

When spring appeared, with its clear skies, sweet odours, and loudly singing birds, Mr. Small announced to Mahomet that he was to return to his native land.

Accordingly, one fine morning the stage-coach stopped "at the end of the lane," and Mahomet, to the surprise of the passengers, climbed to the top of it, somewhat after the fashion of a sloth. The Chinese trunk was handed up, and off went the coach, rattling gaily along ; whilst the Indian lighted his pipe, sitting as abstractedly and silently as though he had been on a rock in the wilderness ; and Master Singleton cried and stamped as coach, horses, Mahomet and all disappeared in a cloud of dust. Not that Master Singleton's heart ached at losing his dusky guardian, but that he felt a craving for the Indian sun, for "tiffin," a ride in a palanquin, and plenty of submissive "natives" to pinch,

beat, and scratch. He felt too a morbid longing for praise and admiration such as his papa's friends were wont to give him. All these feelings had been excited in him by the idea of Mahomet's return to India.

"Don't 'ee take on so, my dear, don't 'ee now!" cried Jenny, stooping down and gently caressing Richard: "your papa and Mr. *Maynet* 'll both come and see 'ee soon, I'll be bound. You shall have a gilt gingerbread king when we gets home. Come along; 'taint no use fretting; it'll only gnaw you to pieces!"

Richard returned Jenny's kindness by vowing that he did not care about either his papa, or Mahomet, or Jenny, or any one in the world; and that he would use her as he did the "black devils" in India; and thereupon he bit her honest, hard-working old hand, screaming with all his might.

"Drat the child! they'll think I'm a skinning of him alive!" thought Jenny; and then, seizing Master Singleton's wrist, she cried out, "Here's Doctor Blenkins! I see his gig coming out o' the dust yonder; and his man with the silver-lace band to his hat a sitting beside him, with ever so many saws and knives in his hand! That I did, as sure as you're a boy, my dear."

Master Singleton, tamed by this supposed appearance of his bogie, returned home with Jenny, frowning and sobbing as he went.

Old Jenny Wood watched over Richard with the affection of a mother: she gave him his first ideas of religion; and although, as she said, she was but "a poor scholar," yet she bought a horn-book, and proceeded to teach him to read.

As she sat teaching him by the open window, Jenny's mind would wander back to days long past and gone; when she, a little village child, stood beside the dame's knee, as Richard stood beside hers; when she lazily said her letters, listening to the cawing of rooks, the rustling of trees, the

humming of bees, and distracting her attention by watching the chequered light on the school-room wall, and the dame's bee-hives and gay flowers in the little garden. Then thoughts came of her parents, her brothers and sisters, and companions, their sports and rambles, till with a sigh, followed by a smile, she returned to Richard, saying :

“ Lor ! I wasn't attending to 'ee ; was I now, my dear ? ”

When summer came on, Master Singleton was out all day gaining some little strength of body, and more serenity of mind than he had formerly possessed.

He was sometimes carried to Warton by Mr. Small, to pass the day with his “ little folks,” other small people being invited to join the party.

Master Singleton had never before played with children, and their modes did not quite please him. He imagined that where he was no one was to be above him. The young Smalls and the other children did not partake of this idea ; they were quite willing that he should be one among them, share equally in their sports, and make himself happy like they did ; but they resisted his attempts at supremacy, and put him down with one consent. There was one little girl, however, Rose Adams, the youngest child of an officer's widow, who ever took Richard's part : her gentle little heart could not bear to see any one in grief, or even ruffled. When Master Singleton had been sent to Coventry for overbearing conduct, Rose would steal up to him, and kissing him, say :—

“ I will play with you, if you like, little black-boy ! ”

“ Don't call me black-boy, and perhaps I'll let you,” the gracious Richard would reply.

The name of “ black-boy ” had been given to him by Jemmy Small, to his very legitimate disgust.

From the children's parties to which he was invited he ever returned with sensations of uneasiness, envy, and

anger: uneasiness at having produced no effect; envy of the boys who were stronger and more manly than himself; and anger at the young company in general, because they laughed at him, and would not submit to his tyranny. Bad feelings at so young an age: but the seeds of man's passions begin to sprout within the childish breast as soon as children can walk and talk. There they are, and there any one who takes the trouble to look for them will undoubtedly find them.

Jenny would tell Richard that he must not find fault with his playmates, when Richard in his infant spleen, was trying to take from the merits of the boys he envied, and abusing the little girls who preferred them to himself.

"Nasty things, I hate them all!" he would say; "I'll never go out again. I like to be alone with you, Jenny, because then there's nobody to tease me, or to be stronger and bigger than I am!"

"Don't 'ee say so, my dear," was Jenny's reply; "'taint good to be alone, we should go with our felly creeturs, and bear and forbear, bless 'ee, and do a good turn to 'em whenever we can; and if they ain't quite kind to us, poor things, we ought to forgive 'em, to be sure. We didn't ought to live like so many snails shut up in their shells; and you musn't hate the little ladies and gentlemen, but go among 'em pleasant and open like, and not want to be Mr. Somebody, my dear, and then they'll all love 'ee, and you'll be as happy as a little bird!"

"I won't though!" quoth Richard; "but you ask Rose Adams to come here, because she does everything I tell her."





## CHAPTER III.

## BOSCOBELLE ACADEMY.

MRS. ADAMS, the mother of Rose, was, as before stated, the widow of an officer. He had died leaving her barely enough to live upon, or to maintain her two children, Janet and Rose. Mrs. Adams was not cast down by her ill fortune : on the contrary, she seemed to gain strength and courage from it. She turned her eyes on every side, in order to see what was to be done to gain an honest livelihood, not deeming herself above doing so, although she was of gentle birth, but thinking it far more honourable to support herself and her children than to be dependent on any human being.

Mrs. Adams took a small cottage about a quarter of a mile from Warton ; opened a day school for little boys and girls, and soon numbered fifteen young pupils ; chiefly owing to the good offices of Mr. Small, who had, at his outset in life, been helped forward by Mrs. Adams' uncle.

"One good turn deserves another," said Mr. Small to Mrs. Adams. "Sensible woman, my dear madam ! No notion of ladies whiling away the time in hysterics ; look ugly—does no good—slap on the face best cure—ask Blenkins ! Breeches pockets always at a friend's service—don't like cold-hearted breeches pockets ! Any little sum in cash ? You understand. Make it a loan, if you prefer—pay interest to please your pride ? No, say I, never ! Four head of young folks from our house—do to open the ball—Jemmy, Tommy, Jemima, and Ann. Excepting young devil from India—Singleton. Know Singleton ? No ! Well, we'll throw him in, young un I mean. Oh ! you'll do very well, my dear madam. Most obedient—always proud to back you up—servant, madam !"

The lawyer was as good as his word, never suffering his friends to rest until their small children were enrolled in Mrs. Adams' school—"the College," as he was wont to call it.

"The college" was a pleasant spot, redolent of jessamine, roses, and violets. The children met in a good-sized room. The boys were ranged together on one bench; the girls on another. Mrs. Adams sat at a desk. On a stool beside her sat Janet, a clever, lively, black-eyed girl, about Richard's age, who helped her mother by teaching the very little ones to plough through the alphabet, and A, B, ab—B, A, ba—&c., &c. Little Rose sat on the girls' bench, trying to set a good example to the rest, and to be as well conducted as she possibly could be.

Rose was scarcely five years old, being younger than Janet—plump, rosy-cheeked Janet—a young girl, with a clear mind and a good temper; straightforward, cheerful, and upright, both in soul and body. Janet was like her mother—Rose like her father. She was lightly and delicately made; her little feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground as she coursed about, hopping here and there like a bird. Her features were well cut and small; her eyes were large, and of a tender blue; their expression that of a little angel's, full of softness, meekness, and kindness. When she laughed her eyes seemed to smile as well as her rosy mouth. Her skin was very fair; a slight blush of pink tinged her cheeks; her hair was golden, and soft as unspun silk. Rose had not the cleverness of Janet; but she had quite sense enough for any feminine creature. Everything she did had a stamp of goodness and kindness on it, from the manner in which the little thing behaved in school time, trying to help her mamma by setting an example, to the way in which she carried her kitten about, and fed her canary.

Her kindness shone forth in her conduct to Master Singleton. She would listen smilingly to his tales of his grand eastern life, palanquins, elephants, "tiffins," and servants. She believed certain exaggerations put forth by the young gentleman on the subject of snakes and tigers; also his assertion that he should be a "native prince" as soon as he should be a man, and that then he would give her bangles and other jewels, and that he would send over a couple of elephants for her and Jenny to ride on.

Janet's heart, as well as Rose's, beat kindly towards Richard; but Richard viewed her not with the same favour that he showed to Rose. Janet's love was not so passive as her sister's: she tried, young as she was, to set Richard in the right way, endeavouring to soothe his irritability by good counsel, and trying, with all her childish might, to make him more happy than he was.

By order of Mr. Blenkins, Richard passed his first summer in England in running wild, for the benefit of his health. The spring following he was sent as day-boarder to Mrs. Adams' "college."

Mrs. Adams took great interest in Richard. She soon perceived that he was wonderfully apt at learning; but that, if not duly watched and regulated, his mind would be an awful scourge to him in after life. She saw the seeds of vanity, envy, and hatred springing up—his soul about to be overrun with weeds. Now was the time to pluck up the first that should appear; now was the time to endeavour to sow the seeds of the virtues which are contrary to the bad passions which possessed him. Mrs. Adams did all in her power to till and cultivate Richard's mind. It was a hard task; her work of one day being undone the next. Still she persevered; hoping in some degree to save him from the misery she foresaw would be his, if he should grow up with his bad passions raging within him.

During three whole years Mrs. Adams toiled at the improvement of Richard's soul; at the end of that time he was a little less unamiable than he had been, yet still unamiable enough to be disliked by every one but old Jenny and his two playmates, Janet and Rose; beings so benignant that neither hatred nor dislike could find place within their hearts.

At eleven years of age Master Singleton was paraded before Mr. Blenkins, who, after much silence and a little reflection, pronounced him to be fit for school.

"Not a public school; that would never do; the fellow's no stamina and no pluck. Send him to a bread and butter school—quite good enough for *him*, sir! Gad! he'll never be half a man, poor fellow!"

So spake Mr. Blenkins to Mr. Small, when Richard left the room.

"Bless my soul! Sad case—give him beef and beer, eh? Take his books away—put him on a rough trotting horse—any effect? Make a man of him?—eh?"

To this speech of Mr. Small's the Doctor made answer, as he slowly and cautiously put on his hat to depart:—

"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, sir!"

In consequence of Mr. Blenkins' advice, Master Singleton was sent to a private school twenty or thirty miles from his home.

Old Jenny made him up a basket of cakes and oranges; little Rose netted him a purse; and both cried with all their heart when he left them. Janet felt sad at parting with him, thought much on him, but said nothing.

Master Singleton cried bitterly when Mr. Small, having conveyed him to his school, took his leave; and he found himself *tête-à-tête* with the usher, in a large white-washed room, having a ventilator to each window, a row of desks down either side, with a raised one at each end, behind one

of which the usher was sitting composing poetry, and rubbing his chin.

Richard had been crying and sobbing for some time, when the poet, striking the desk, cried out to him :—

“ Come, you Singleton, leave off making that noise.

‘ The night, which brings to others rest,  
A train to me of horrid—’

No—phantom—no, that won’t do—Hold your tongue this instant, sir, or I’ll cane you black and blue ! How am I to find a rhyme, or anything else, whilst you are making that noise ? Be quiet directly ! ”

Mr. Sawtre, the usher, continued muttering, from time to time writing down his thoughts and sighing deeply. A spring shower was falling, and Richard added to his misery by watching it through his tears, together with the rainbow, produced by the sickly rays of the afternoon sun struggling through the clouds.

Distant voices in the house, the monotonous sound of the spinning ventilators, the crowing of a cock, and the chirping of drenched sparrows, caused his spirits to sink to zero.

Four o’clock struck.

The recollection of Jenny’s tea, which took place at that hour—the thought of her cheerful face and kind voice, and the little treats she was wont to provide for him—caused him to burst out into a most violent, unchecked paroxysm of crying.

“ Come here, sir ! ” shouted Mr. Sawtre, “ Come here ! don’t you hear me, you little wretch ? Come here, when you’re called. You’ve made me make a hundred mistakes through your howling.

‘ The forms of beauty to the poet’s eye  
Are ever distant, ever nigh.  
Th’ ethereal space, above, below, around,  
With fervid thoughts, enchantment wild abound  
Whilst real is nought, and nought is real—’

“Come here, sir ! come here, or I’ll flay you !”

Master Singleton crept up to the irritable poet, whose lean hand was brought violently against Richard’s cheek.

He had never before received a blow. Mr. Sawtre’s caused Richard to gasp, quiver, and return to his place moaning and weeping.

The door was opened ; a red-faced footboy looked in.

“Mr. Sawtre, sir !” he cried, “please to step this way ; you’re wanting.”

Mr. Sawtre put down his pen and disappeared, much to Richard’s relief, who was thus left to cry and sob alone. He had passed about half-an-hour in tears, his boyish soul full of bitterness, despair, and misery, when the door was again opened. Richard started, thinking that Mr. Sawtre was about to enter. He was mistaken : it was Miss Savory, the sister of Dr. Savory, D.D., the respected head of Boscobelle Academy, who now made her appearance. This lady was a “fine woman,” nicely rouged, and smartly dressed. On her head she wore a muslin handkerchief tied under her plump chin ; her dress was jonquil colour ; her slippers of the same colour, with sky-blue heels and binding. She carried a duster in one hand, a small broom in the other ; for Miss Savory had been busily employed in overlooking the preparations for the return of the boys to Boscobelle, herself helping in the light part of the work.

“Tut, tut, my little man ! we must have no crying here ; we must be very happy and cheerful, or I shall scold. All your young friends will be here to-morrow ; quite a merry party, I declare. Now dry your eyes and smile.”

So saying, Miss Savory stooped over Richard and wiped his tears away with the duster.

“There, now,” she cried, “we are happy again, I declare. You shall drink tea with us in the parlour this

afternoon for a treat, and unpack your basket and make quite a little feast. Come, give me your hand; hop, skip, and jump—off we go!”

Richard had no “hop, skip, and jump” in him; and Miss Savory’s regulation cheerfulness sank his spirits even more than the shower, the rainbow, the ventilators, the cock, the sparrows, or even Mr. Sawtre. The parlour into which she led him was large, and somewhat bare of furniture. Before the fire a small tea-table was spread out in readiness for guests. The heavy mahogany flat-footed chairs were ranged against the walls, which were decked with a few prints in oval frames. The high chimneypiece was ornamented with a china shepherd and shepherdess sitting beneath a tree, on which tiny cauliflowers of various colours were sprouting; at the feet of the sylvan pair reposed a fat lamb and a red dog. The shepherd was piping, the shepherdess supposed to be warbling from a little book resting on her knees. On each side of them pasteboard card-racks and bunches of peacocks’ feathers completed the chimney furniture. The well scrubbed floor was carpeted only in the middle, the chairs standing on the bare boards.

“Thomas!” cried Miss Savory, in shrill tones, as she led Richard into the parlour, “bring Master Singleton’s hamper, and the cake-dishes, and make haste.”

The hamper being duly brought, Richard was set to work to unpack it, and to place Jenny’s fine home-made plumcake and crisp biscuits on divers dishes and platters; Miss Savory walking about the room the while; arranging chairs around the tea-table; picking a piece of sugar from the bason; munching the same; tasting the cakes from Richard’s basket; arranging her hair before the glass; placing the dishes on the table; and finally, presenting Master Singleton with one of his own biscuits, bidding him

look out of the window till she should return ; and so leaving the room with the empty hamper.

Master Singleton did not find much to cheer his spirits, as he knelt on a chair and gazed from the window. The small flower garden, with its straight gravel walk, looked dripping and dank. Beyond the half wall and iron railings, he could see carts or waggons pass, now and then, on their way from market ; a few farmers jogging home on their rough nags ; some among them with a wife or daughter behind on a pillion—the hoods of their scarlet cloaks drawn over their black bonnets, as a protection from spring showers ; farmers' wives also, who had come into town with panniers well stocked with eggs, butter, cheese, and poultry, were leaving with the said panniers full of household stores, or quite empty. A fat recruiting sergeant marched past with his little staff ; the sergeant himself in all the pride of his scarlet coat, pipe-clayed breeches, neat black-cloth gaiters, shining leather stock, and well crimped shirt-frill. His hat was put on with an air, his red nose held aloft, his military queue all that regulation could desire ; and so he stepped briskly with his fluttering ribands—drum and fife rattling and squeaking “the White Cockade ;” recruits in frocks and worsted stockings rolling and shouldering along ; whilst lads accompanied the march having a “huge *moind* to list ;” and country girls gazed and listened with fond admiration as the soldiers stepped past.

Some children are apt to entertain melancholy in a greater degree than is generally supposed. I have heard many people recount how, when they were children, a trifle would set them musing, and feeling sad for a time : a bright sun with a high wind ; the shadows on the roofs and chimneys of a large town ; the leaves slowly whirling down from the trees on a quiet autumn evening ; the ticking and striking



of the clock on a hot summer's afternoon ; the glittering path made by the sunshine on the sea ; the hurry and bustling about of carriages during the London " season ;" such things, and others of the like sort, would make those children melancholy, they knew not why.

Richard was one of these morbid little beings : the military procession, together with the dripping of the remaining rain-drops from boughs, eaves, and railings, and a dead wall opposite the house, overtopped by firs and larches, sank his spirits and caused him to shut his eyes and lean his head against the half blind, meditating the while in melancholy sort. He was aroused by a ring at the garden gate, which being duly opened by Thomas, gave entrance to a sedan-chair bearing Miss Savory's expected visitor. Miss Savory herself darted into the room, stirred the fire, and sat down before it, with a large green paper fan held to protect her cheeks from the scorching of the flames ; the soldiers marched into town again to the tune of " St. Patrick's Day ;" Richard sighed ; and " Miss Plimpton " was announced.

Miss Plimpton was a lady of forty, small, thin, and sentimental, who travelled about to tea parties in a sedan-chair, and brought her netting with her in a sky-blue workbag. She kissed Miss Savory, and cast her eyes over the tea table, setting herself beside the fire, seemingly well pleased at all she beheld on the festive board.

" And the dear Doctor ? " she inquired.

" Not home yet ; but we shall see him at supper. Mr. Sawtre has promised to come in to tea, and to bring his instrument and a poem."

Miss Plimpton blushed at this piece of news. Richard was told to come and speak to her. A silver urn, upright and narrow as those on funeral stones, was placed on the table ; Mr. Sawtre duly made his appearance with a black

bag and a copy-book; the company placed themselves round the table; and tea began.

Richard mentally objected to the milk-and-water given to him instead of tea, as well as to a thick slice of bread and butter, which he was expected to eat through before he should arrive at his cakes, of which the company were making great havoc. Master Singleton dared not complain, owing to the dread presence of Mr. Sawtre, at whom he cast sidelong glances, so amazed was he to behold him smilingly handing tea and cakes to the ladies, and at hearing him talk to them in soft accents—his head on one side, and his hand in the breast of his waistcoat. When Miss Savory had presented Richard to him, he had gently patted his head, saying that they should soon be very good friends, appearing totally to have forgotten the little *fracas* which had taken place so recently in the schoolroom.

Master Singleton could not understand all this.

“It’s the same man,” he thought; “but perhaps he don’t remember me.”

Master Singleton, moreover, could not understand how it was that he was so powerless as regarded his own property. Mr. Sawtre was devouring a wedge of his plum-cake; Miss Plimpton had arrived at her second slice of it, her eyes fixed on Jenny’s tempting little crisp cakes, which Miss Savory was causing to disappear; whilst Richard was eating his thick bread and butter, despairing of ever tasting his cakes, and yet not daring to utter a word.

He had never felt so cowed before, save in the presence of Mr. Blenkins.

Whenever Mr. Sawtre looked towards Richard he grinned and nodded. Miss Savory said to him, from time to time—“We’re quite happy now, I declare!” and Miss Plimpton took no notice of him.

“Nasty things; I hate them,” quoth Master Singleton

inwardly; "and they won't leave me a bit of cake, I'm quite sure."

Richard sat up, "one in a crowd." He knew none of the people the assembled company talked about; neither did he understand all that they said.

Miss Savory cut out prints of cupids, doves, flowers, and lyres, to stick on a cardboard basket; Miss Plimpton took out her netting; and Mr. Sawtre, drawing a yellow one-keyed flute from the black bag, put it together, executed a preliminary "peet-tweet-peet!—twittery-twittery—poo-peet-poo!" then proceeded to entertain the ladies with a selection of Scotch and Irish airs, each set off with one variation, and many shakes and *appoggiature*.

Then he read a ballad of his own composition, "Fair Rosalie and the Spectre's Glen"—a ballad which made Richard shudder.

Miss Plimpton left off working to listen; nodded her head to the metre, causing the little tassel which hung at the point of the net she wore to dance about emphatically, as she sighed and shook her head. Miss Plimpton being a maiden of independent fortune, Mr. Sawtre thought of quitting the profession of usher and retiring on that fair lady's patrimony.

"That man seems much kinder to the thin old lady than he was to me," thought Richard.

Before the evening was over he began to wish that he could play the flute and write poetry like Mr. Sawtre.

A knock at the parlour door, and a voice saying it was time for the young gentleman to go to bed, caused Master Singleton to retire. Outside the door he found a fat, red-elbowed young housemaid, who told him "to brush along and look sharp," conducting him into a bed-room, in which stood a row of ten little white beds.

“This is yours ; make haste and undress, and say your prayers.”

Master Singleton obeyed her commands, and jumped into bed.

“ Well ! if I ever ! You looks more like Snap the terrier lying in the snow, than a *Chrishun* in his bed. Good night, sir ; you must get up when you hears the first bell, or you’ll have the Doctor about your house.”

So spake Susan as she carried off the light, leaving Richard to think of old Jenny’s gentle, cheerful, and loving “ Good nights.” He cried bitterly as he thought thereon ; it seemed to him centuries since Mr. Small had left him, with the recommendation “ to be a man : ” he felt cheerless, desolate, and miserable. The bright moonlight streaming in through the window, gave to his view the tenantless white beds ; there was a dead silence around ; the story of “ Fair Rosalie and the Spectre’s Glen ” arose in his recollection, adding terror to his lone misery :—

“ The Spectre stretched forth his long cold arms,  
The death-worms twining round them ;  
He kissed the lady’s damask cheek,  
Low, hellish words his lips did speak—  
The corpse-lights burnt around them.

“ Fair Rosalie ne’er was seen again !—  
When storm-clouds scowl and lower,  
In that dread glen at dead of night  
Is seen a ghastly, lurid light ;  
Shrieks rise above the roaring storm,  
And tell of the Spectre’s power ! ”

This finale to Mr. Sawtre’s ballad haunted the poor little boy. He did not understand it ; but there was to him something mystical and dreadful about it, which made him dive beneath the bed-clothes, to cry himself to sleep, just as the company downstairs were regaling themselves with *his* oranges, and singing songs after supper.

Next morning Master Singleton darted out of bed at the sound of the "first bell."

In due time he left his room, finding his way to the parlour, where Susan was rubbing the legs of the chairs, as a groom might at those of a horse.

"Come, be off!" she cried, on seeing Master Singleton; "we don't want no little boys here. Come, go to your school-room, and I'll call out to cook to take you your breakfast."

Richard walked off as requested, sitting himself down in the school-room to listen to the sparrows and the ventilators, and to wonder what he should have for breakfast.

The cook appeared with it, in the shape of a basin of hot bread and milk, which she put down on the bench beside him.

"I can't bear that stuff!" said Master Singleton, with a contemptuous face. "Bring me some tea and toast: not nasty weak tea, and put plenty of sugar and milk to it."

"Hoity, toity! Who was your servant last year? I've no time for all that; besides, *missis* ordered bread and milk for you."

"I won't eat *that*."

"Then you must leave it."

"I *will* have tea and toast: I always do at home."

"Home ain't school."

"I hate you, you nasty thing!"

"Dear me!"

"Do as I order you, you ugly cook!"

"Hoity, toity! Come, you'd better eat your bread and milk; you'll get nothing else."

Master Singleton responded by throwing a spoonful of his breakfast in the cook's face, who responded in her turn by boxing his ears; whereupon he began to cry.

"Hallo, hallo! Come, come!" sounded from the door, in a loud, deep, rolling voice.

Master Singleton, spoon in hand, turned him round, to behold a stout, square-shouldered man standing in the doorway ; his feet wide apart, a thumb in each arm-hole of his waistcoat, the fingers pointing upwards.

"Singleton, you have lost your *tempar*, my good lad, you have indeed. Remembarr the precept (round-hand—letter C), 'Command your *tempar*.' We cannot allow such exhibitions at Boscobelle ; we cannot, indeed. I must see you beg cook's pardon ; I must, indeed. Cook, you will have the goodness to forgive Master Singleton. Now, Singleton, I *affa-ectionately* admonish you to beg cook's pardon."

With these words the stout man, Dr. Savory, clapped his hands together, wagged his head, and stamped his foot, in a manner which caused Richard to say moodily, "I beg pardon," eyeing the doctor all the while.

"Cook, you may retire. Now, Singleton, let me see you eat your wholesome mess of bread and milk. How many poor children *arre* at this moment without sustenance ; would be glad of the meal you scorn. Take up your spoon, sir, and let me see you cheerfully breakfast, as gleesome youth should do, unvexed by *carre*. Commence, sir, and cease weeping !" cried the Doctor, taking an ebony ruler from his pocket, which he hit against the palm of his stout left hand, in a manner, and with a meaning, that set Richard diligently to work at the bread and milk, solacing himself by inwardly repeating—

"You're nearly as nasty as Mr. Blenkins, and I hate you nearly as much as I do him."

"Your young companions, Singleton, will be here in the course of the day, *eagerr* to resume the studies which the Easter vacation suspended," said the Doctor, watching Richard's progress. "You will form a happy band of diligent youth ; pursuing learning through the flowery

mazes of *grammarr*, history, poesy, *etceteror*! But I must not have you, dear boy, give way to *burrsts* of passion, such as I have had the surprise and sorrow recently to witness. ‘*Ira furor brevis est*’—you will find that quotation in your Syntaxian pursuits. No leavings, Singleton, no leavings! Let me see you finish your morning meal neatly and cheerfully. Remember, *Waste not want not*, the golden rule, loved by the wise, but *scorn-ed* by the fool! So, that will do. I will now leave you to youthful meditations, fancy free. We shall assemble here to-morrow morning.”

So saying, Dr. Savory patted Richard’s cheek, turned the lozenges which he sucked from morning till night, and so strode majestically from the room, leaving his new pupil to sit and mope alone.

In the course of the afternoon divers arrivals took place, and boys began to fill the whitewashed school-room, being all more or less afflicted with the dumps.

They got together in little knots to recount their holiday adventures; talking all together, loud and fast; no boy giving much attention to his neighbour’s discourse, being too eager himself to talk. So it would be in the grown-up world, did not sense and politeness step in to regulate the crowd.

Master Singleton, as “the new boy,” became, after a time, an object of attention to the rest. He was asked by half-a-dozen young persons at once what his name was; where he came from; who his father was, &c., &c. Richard, becoming brisk under the notice taken of him, dashed off into all his old tales of tigers, elephants, native servants, palanquins, &c., winding up by informing his listeners that he should be a “native prince” when he became a man. There was a short silence when he came to a close—a silence soon broken by laughter, and rude signs of contempt and disbelief.

“ Oh ! ” “ Granny ! ” “ Crammars ! ” “ Let’s have it all over again ! ” “ Bounce ! ” “ Marines ! ” “ Long bows for ever—hooray ! ” and such like expressions hovered around Richard.

“ Don’t you believe it though ? Perhaps it’s true ! ” said some of the little boys.

This only increased the hilarity ; whereat Master Singleton, waxing wroth, “ ran amuck : ” kicking, biting, scratching, and crying ; whilst he himself was hustled and cuffed, and the uproar became so great as to call Mr. Sawtre to the scene of action.

When that pedagogue entered the room he beheld, in the middle of it, a dark knot of small human beings, struggling, waving, scuffling ; whilst his ears were saluted by a buzzing sound, relieved by hallooing, laughing, and crying.

Mr. Sawtre’s entrance not having been seen by the boys, who heard not his voice, he proceeded to charge the staggering crowd, and to lay about him with his cane. The mob dispersed, some rubbing their arms, others screwing in their backs with a wincing expression of face, and others again jumping about wringing their caned knuckles. “ Oh, sir ! ” roared some : “ Please, sir ! ” “ I say, sir ! don’t sir ! ” ( “ It’s old Sawtre ! ” ) “ Let us off, sir ! ” “ New boy’s a scratch-cat, sir ! ” quoth the others.

“ Hush ! silence there ! ” shouted Mr. Sawtre, frowning, and flourishing his cane. “ I’ve treated you justly ; I took you as you came ; you’ve nothing to complain of, boys. Now, what’s the meaning of all this disturbance ? ”

Richard, who was standing with heaving breast, dishevelled hair, and a very wet face, in the midst of a circle of boys, raised his voice saying—

“ They’re nasty things, sir ! They laughed at me, and said I told lies ! ”

A chorus now burst forth in loud tones :—



"So he did, sir!" "He says he's to be a native prince, sir!" "He said he could saddle his own elephant, sir, and shoot a tiger flying!" "He bit little Brown's hand, sir, and scratched young Thompson's face all the way down!" "He deserves a licking, sir!" "Any of us would fight him left-handed, t'other tied behind our backs, sir!" "Let us, sir, please, sir!"

"No, nonsense!" cried Mr. Sawtre. "The Doctor don't allow fighting."

"Only this once, sir!" shouted a little boy, whisking his jacket out of his "skeletons," and turning up his shirt-sleeves. "I'll be caned three times running if the Doctor likes, sir! You can stand by, sir, and see all fair. Only a few rounds, just for a treat, sir. It would make us all friendly, sir. Now, prince, strip, and shake hands, and come on like a man!"

"Nonsense, Brownlow! I can't allow it. Put on your jacket, sir, directly!" said Mr. Sawtre. "Here's the Doctor," he added, as the head of Boscobelle Academy came into the room, and majestically sought his desk.

When there, he put his thumbs in his arm-holes, looked with calm dignity around him, and cried emphatically, "To your places, boys! Singleton, come hither."

Mr. Sawtre having given an account of the riot, and the cause thereof, Doctor Savory replenished his mouth with a lozenge, which he drew solemnly from his waistcoat pocket, rocked himself gently on heels and toes, and spoke as follows :—

"Sorry and vexed am I, young friends and pupils, that the festive occasion of your return to Boscobelle should have been *marked* by so disgraceful an *outburrst* of popular feeling. Singleton, you, as the *aggrressive* cause of the tumult, must *sufferr* for your offence. To-morrow, at ten o'clock, you will be *ferruled* severely, and I shall inflict the

castigation ! Mr. Sawtre, you will have the *urrbanity* to make a note of the sentence, the too lenient sentence which I have awarded to the offender. Boys ! Miss *Sa-vor-ry* and myself had hoped to see you this evening at a little feast, prepared to celebrate your joy on resuming your studious avocations." (This feast was a figment of the Doctor's brain.) " We must deprive ourselves of that pleasure : our sandwiches, our cakes, our oranges, our negus (" Oh, sir ! please sir ! " from the boys, put down by Mr. Sawtre), our various good things have been prepared in vain. We should not enjoy them without our young friends. Boys ! you will retire to the exercise *grround*, and *therre* remain until the bell summons you home. Singleton ! you have this day twice *transgressed* ! We cannot allow this ; we cannot, indeed. You will remain in the class, meditative and alone. Gentlemen, *disperse* ! "

The boys ran clattering out into the playground ; the Doctor retired to tea and muffins ; Mr. Sawtre sat down at his desk to copy out " Fair Rosalie and the Spectre's Glen " for Miss Plimpton ; whilst Master Singleton chewed the cud of his late adventure in no very placid frame of mind.



## CHAPTER IV.

### FIRST LOVE.

It may readily be imagined that Richard's conduct had not impressed his comrades in his favour : they thought his impending castigation too slight a one ; looking forward to see if he would bear it with " pluck," or if he would " funk " it.

When Dr. Savorv stalked into the schoolroom, looking to

the right and left, rolling his lozenge in his huge mouth, Master Singleton began to tremble. The Doctor mounted the raised platform on which stood his desk; all the boys raised their eyes from their books, and looked towards him.

"Singleton, come hither!" cried the Doctor, in a deep and solemn voice, beckoning Richard with his massive square fore-finger, as well as by a backward jerk of his ponderous head; which head was ever decked with a clerical peruke, well dressed and powdered.

As Richard began to cry, and did not move from his place, Dr. Savory's voice was again heard, amidst breathless silence on the part of the boys.

"Mr. Sawtre!" he said, "kindly bring forward the offender."

Mr. Sawtre, seizing the offender by the arm, led him to the place of punishment.

"Hand, sir!" cried the doctor, taking up the ebony ruler.

No hand was put forward.

"Funky!" whispered the boys.

"Mr. Sawtre! have the *urbanity* to present the offender's palm."

The usher did as he was requested: *whack—whack—whack*—was distinctly heard through the room, as the coal-black ruler smote Richard's hand, in spite of his wriggling struggles and strangled cries.

"What a funky sneak!" "What a row about a '*span-dey!*'" "Just like a girl!" was buzzed among the contemptuous boys.

"Gentlemen! *resume* your avocations, laying the late occurrence to heart. Singleton! cease weeping, and *remain* by my side; I wish to *ascertain* what are your mental acquirements,"

Although Richard found but small favour with the boys, he became a great favourite both with the Doctor and with Mr. Sawtre, in consequence of his natural quickness, his great aptitude for learning, and his love of study.

Poor Richard was awfully bullied by the boys, who took delight in putting him into a "wax," an exploit not very difficult to perform. Brownlow, the little fellow who, in order to put things on a friendly footing, had wished to fight him, would take his part, and try, moreover, to make him more amiable and more "jolly" than he was wont to be. Richard was glad enough when the sturdy little Briton came to his help in time of need; but he felt no gratitude towards his protector. He envied Brownlow his strong, well-made young limbs, his stout body, his cool courage, and his good temper; and envying him, he soon hated him—hated him for the very help he brought.

Master Singleton never sought the other boys, or mixed in their sports; he would sometimes indulge in a game of marbles with Brownlow, playing in a fractious mood, ready to quarrel for a trifle. None but so good-natured a boy as Brownlow could have played with him; but Brownlow pitied him, and in kindness of heart tried to make him his friend.

Richard's delight was to sit apart reading.

The playground had once been a large garden at the back of the house. When Doctor Savory bought the place, calling it Boscobelle Academy, he caused the garden to be dug up and covered with gravel. Of this garden, however, there still remained a large cypress tree in the middle, an old weeping willow in a corner at the lower end, and a yew arbour on one side. In this arbour sat by day, by night, in heat and in cold, still and hard, an old gentleman, diligently reading, or supposed so to be, seeing that he was carved in stone; he looked, however, very life-like, being full sized

and painted. Every spring, his garments, flesh, and book were renewed by the painter, who ever gave him the same chocolate-coloured coat, black breeches, and white stockings striped with blue. His three-cornered hat had a yellow rim, representing gold lace; his cheeks were florid in the extreme; his book, in brown cover, was vermillion edged, but the pages before him were a mere blank. When the old gentleman had first taken possession of the arbour, a paper, from the "Spectator," touching Will Honeycombe, had been spread beneath his stony eyes. The paint-brush had hidden the letters at a later period, but the old gentleman did not seem to feel the loss, so placidly and complacently he still kept one hand in his breast, whilst the other held his book. In this arbour, and beside this figure, Richard loved to hide himself from the noisy boys, there to read and to ponder; and there they would sometimes seek him, drawing him like a badger in order to torment him.

In that arbour, on hot summer afternoons, he devoured the "Arabian Nights," and then he would sit on the ground, lean his head on the old gentleman's bench, shut his eyes, think on the wondrous tales he had read, wishing he could meet with the adventures therein recounted. Then he would build castles in the air, pleasant day-dreams, in which he was the hero, beneath the hot skies of India, riding on a wooden horse, who would carry him through the high dark-blue heavens to exciting adventures, setting him down on a high mountain, where he should behold an iron ring beside the stump of a tree; by means of the ring raise a trap-door—descend into the bowels of the earth—meet with robbers—genii—princes and ladies turned into various animals—great treasures—splendid feasts. Then, too, he would stroll through bazaars—meet with mysterious merchants and traders smoking long pipes—accept their invitation to a lone house—flog, at their threats and bidding, a black slave

—dig up a pot of gold, hide a portion of the coin in his girdle, and then——“Drang-drang-drang-drang!” the bell would ring for school; his visions would fly away like smoke; a rude boy, excited with play, would knock his hat off, calling him “Stick-in-the-mud.” The white-washed schoolroom was reached; prosaic lessons were his lot. Sad reverse: no longer a handsome Eastern prince with thick moustache, snow-white turban, and embroidered garments, but only a little schoolboy in “skeletons,” at an academy in an English country town. Oh, castles! oh, dreams!

In holiday time he solaced himself by abusing the school, and by recounting his griefs to old Jenny and little Rose; whilst to his friend Janet he spoke not on the subject, having a feeling that he should lower himself in her opinion by so doing. Old Jenny was wont to answer:—“La! my dear, 'tain't no use talking; we must all take the rough with the smooth; the sun don't shine every day. Young gentlemen *must* go to school and be made *scholars* on; not grow up like we poor folks. You did ought to be very thankful, bless 'ee, and try and make 'eeself pleasant, and they wouldn't upset 'ee so then, and *you'd* be all the better for it, my dear, that you certainly would.” Rose, on the contrary, pitied Richard with all her tender little heart; listened patiently, and with interest, to all his woes, and was never tired of listening, or of hearing him talk of himself.

She liked, too, to hear wonderful tales from the books he had read, and he liked to see her open her soft blue eyes as he proceeded, beautifying and lengthening his stories by additions of his own, and breaking off like the Sultana Scheherazade, to tantalize little Rose, and to add to his own importance.

With Janet he would talk over his studies, and the progress he made in them. She listened with kind smiles to his discoursing; and although she neither praised nor

flattered him, her looks and smiles were pleasing to his soul.

At Singleton Hall there was a library, which became Richard's chief holiday delight. There he found "Gulliver," "Don Quixote," "Robinson Crusoe," and various other works of the kind, all ornamented by "cuts." There, too, he found old English ballads and songs, and with these he stored his memory, reading beneath the tall trees on the soft turf, throughout the dreamy summer days—beside Jenny's blazing fire when wintry winds roared and torrents fell. As he grew older, his thirst for reading increased—his talents developed themselves, and Dr. Savory's pride in him knew no bounds.

Mr. Blenkins, before whom Richard was paraded during the holidays, had said:—

"Very wishy-washy! Glass of port every day, and no trash. You'd better make a parlour-boarder of him, sir."

In consequence of this fiat, Mr. Small had arranged that Richard, in his fourteenth year, should become parlour-boarder at Boscobelle Academy. Parlour-boarder he became accordingly, greatly to his satisfaction, having of late been more baited than ever, there being no Brownlow to protect him; Brownlow, after the first year, having proceeded to Winchester School as a Commoner.

"Don't know what the deuce he'll grow up," said Mr. Small to Dr. Savory, on the occasion of Richard's translation from the school to the parlour. "Rum stock, sir, rum stock, *very*. No notion of field sports—no notion of manly games. Cricket, football, sliding, skating, boxing—no such words in *his* book. Likes tarts better than a steak—steak a great criterion, sir. Cut his finger t'other day—fainted—fainted, by gad, sir! Never fainted in my life. Don't see his way clearly at all; quite a millstone to me. Glad he's not my boy, by Jove!"

The Doctor, crossing his stout and gaitered legs, and twisting his thumbs, blandly replied:—

“My dear sir, Singleton is a very *promising* lad; very much so, I assure you. His *pursuots* will be literary: he will court the muses nine and coy; with them he will dally; by them he will be crowned! The athlete’s part will not be his; *his* wreaths will be of bays; laurel, pearsley, *etcetteror*, he will leave to youths of sinew; they, like the nimble Arab, may cast the jereed—he will but cast poesy *arround*! You will, one day, *hearr* of him among the literati of the land! The bottle *rremains* with you, Mr. Small!” and Dr. Savory waved his hand towards the decanter.

“Oh!” cried Mr. Small, filling his glass with the Doctor’s excellent Port:—“I see—poetry! Up all night; in bed all day. Scribble, scribble, scribble. Weak body; discontented mind; bilious, interesting, pining—in love all round; nobody in love with him; biting and snapping at everybody; crowned with green baize did you say? Rather be an earth-stopper all my days—more manly; poets morbid fellows. Devil of a life; can’t understand it. Fellow’d better put on churchyard livery at once—brown turned up with green; save him a deal of worry, poor fellow! Bad temper, too! Always standing at the corner of Queer Street. Well, we’ll drink his health; and Heaven send he may turn out better than I think for! Here’s Master Singleton’s health, and good luck and prosperity to him!”

The being parlour-boarder was a great relief to Richard. Dr. Savory allowed him to study in the dining-room, making a kind of literary pet of him. This was pronounced by the boy-public of Boscobelle Academy to be “not fair;” but they settled the matter by opining that “old Savory” acted as he did, because Singleton’s father was “a Nabob.”

Mr. Sawtre, too, petted Richard. Mr. Sawtre had suc-



ceeded according to his wishes in his courtship, and Miss Plimpton had consented to be his. On marrying her he had placed her name before his own, wherefore they figured as Mr. and Mrs. Plimpton Sawtre, living in the home of her deceased sire, a comfortable, flint-built, solid house in the market square.

To this house Richard was wont to repair to see his friend Sawtre, to talk literature with him, to hear his verses, and to show his own attempts at poetry to the ex-usher, who, on reading them, ever whistled gently between his teeth, as was his wont when he looked over the boys' exercises at Boscobelle Academy.

Mr. Plimpton Sawtre was so kind as to give Richard lessons on the "German flute," as it was then called. Richard being fully bent on playing on that instrument as well as Mr. Plimpton Sawtre himself, gave all his spare moments to music, and succeeded well in his new accomplishment.

The "German flutes" came out effectively at the gipsy parties, which Miss Savory got up, from time to time, in the fine summer weather. While the ladies boiled the kettle over a gipsy fire, and the gentlemen flirted with them, helping them to put out the "tea things" and provisions; when Dr. Savory's wig was hung on a bough, and replaced on the Doctor's pate by a red silk handkerchief; then would Mr. Plimpton Sawtre and Richard Singleton steal into the thicket with flutes and books, surprising the company (who knew all along what they meant to do) by bursting forth in melody and harmony, like two Brobdignag singing birds in a bush.

All the ladies of Norly pronounced Richard to be a "very genteel youth;" the men said he was very "Miss Molly." The Doctor predicted a "*glaw*-rious future" for him. Singleton believed in the Doctor's predictions, and

felt quite happy in his new mode of life ; that is, happy for him.

He had a little bedroom of his own, in which he could read and dream in peace. His weekly allowance was increased ; the greater part of which allowance found its way into Jay the pastrycook's till. His "skeletons" were exchanged for man's attire, and he had no rivals to compete with him, or to raise his envy and hatred. He reigned pet supreme at Dr. Savory's, as well as among the Norly fair ones.

Miss Savory employed him in copying music for her ; in writing verses in her extract book ; in holding skeins of silk as she wound them ; in feeding her canaries ; in helping her to prepare the dessert on gala days ; in carrying her parasol for her ; in doing various little commissions ; and in dusting her china and nick-nacks.

By the time Richard was fifteen, he had set up plump Miss Savory as the idol of his heart, worshipping her with great ardour.

All his verses were addressed to her, under the feigned name of Ambrosia. He stole an old thimble of hers ; locked it up in his desk ; fell down and worshipped it morning and evening ; sank to sleep with it in his hand ; and blushed whenever the fair Ambrosia said, musingly :— " I wonder what *can* have become of my old thimble ! You haven't seen it, have you, Singleton ? "

His passion led him, moreover, to lie on his back, his hands beneath his head, beside the murmuring river, in the far-spreading water-meadows ; there looking up into the clear sky ; gazing on the summer clouds, and listening to birds and insects ; whilst he built Arabian-night castles about Ambrosia and himself ; composed poetry in her honour, solacing himself with a roll and a moan of despair whenever he called to mind that Ambrosia was " another's."

She was engaged to a curate, who only awaited a living in order to make Miss Savory his own.

On moonlight nights, when the household were all asleep, he would steal down into the playground, seat himself beneath the cypress tree, and stare at Ambrosia's window.

Unfortunately for Singleton, his old friend Susan, the housemaid, being one night kept awake by the heat of the weather, on looking from her window for air, chanced to spy the watching lover beneath the tree. Susan sprang a rattle: rushed down to the Doctor's room, playing on her rattle as she went; knocked at the door loudly, and cut short the Doctor's quiet, even snoring.

"There's thieves, sir, thieves under the tree in the playground!" shrieked Susan.

The house was aroused; the Doctor, in nightcap, dressing-gown, and slippers, armed with a poker, rushed out to the cypress tree.

The tumult within doors had not broken through Richard's splenetic musings. He now awoke to find himself clutched by the Doctor; a poker brandished over his head, whilst people with candles, and in strange garb, half nocturnal, were surrounding him.

A galaxy of round heads in pudding-bag nightcaps appeared at the boy's bed-room windows; the neighbours were beginning to look from theirs: the hubbub was extreme.

Susan continued to spring the rattle; the cook pealed at the dinner bell; the footboy remained in his room bellowing "Murder!"

"Singleton!" cried the Doctor in surprise, on viewing the being he was about to smash with the poker.

"Aye!" returned Singleton; with the proper degree of moodiness; for being well read in the romances of the day, he imagined that the Doctor had discovered his love

for Ambrosia, and was about to take public revenge on him.

"My dear youth, what *arre* you doing out here at the midnight hour?" inquired Dr. Savory, lowering the poker, and taking his heavy hand from Richard's collar.

"What is it, Doctor?" Miss Savory called from her window.

"Only Singleton, my love; don't be alarmed. Susan has taken him for a depredator."

"La! what can you be doing out there at this time o' night, Singleton? You must be mad! You'll get your death o' cold, Doctor; *do* come in. Go to bed, Singleton; you deserve a caning, *that* you do. Why, there's one o'clock striking by the church clock, I declare!"

The usher now caned all the pudding-bags back to bed; Susan ceased springing the rattle; the cook left off ringing; the disappointed neighbours returned to their respective couches; the footboy continued to roar "Murder!" and to jump about his room, until Susan called to him to "hold his noise" and go to bed; and the Doctor marched Singleton off to his dormitory.

"We cannot allow this, my dear Singleton, we cannot indeed! I am willing to give you every encouragement, and to allow you *rrational* freedom of action: but when once you have *rretired* for the purposes of sleep and restoration of the *cerrebral* powers, I must insist on your remaining in your *chambar*, I must, indeed!"

In reply to this address from the Doctor, Richard could only mutter something about being too warm to sleep, and fresh air, and moonlight; then darting into his room, and refusing a light, he threw himself on his bed without undressing, and bursting into a cataract of tears, cried himself into a dead and heavy sleep.

When at Singleton Hall during the Midsummer holidays,

Richard ornamented the trunks of the finest trees, by carving thereon flaming hearts and the letter A ; he dared not venture to carve Ambrosia at full length. He played melancholy ditties on the flute beneath them ; and passed half the night in study.

Richard scarcely spoke to old Jenny ; she meekly remonstrated with him on his conduct, winding up by saying, "Lor' ever a daisy ! I can't think whatever's come over 'ee ; you do be so comical ; that you certainly be, my dear !"

As for Rose Adams, whom Richard had been wont in schoolboy days to call his "little wife," and to look upon as a companion, he now in his parlour-boarder days of passion considered to be "a mere child !" whilst Rose thought him a marvel, and loved him with all her heart—she would have deemed it treason to have done otherwise.

Singleton was still, however, glad to have her for a listener to his discourse, his poetry, and his flute. He would talk of Miss Savory to Rose, till she wondered what *could* make Richard think so very much of that lady. She moreover asked why all his verses were addressed to Ambrosia ; whereupon he blushed and stammered, saying—"Oh ! you know, poets always have some name of that kind to write about. Isn't it a pretty name ? Ambrosia ! Ambrosia !" At the sound of this name, Richard sighed ; and Rose thought him "very odd," although she did not tell him so.

Janet guessed the truth : she felt that Miss Savory and Ambrosia were one and the same person, Richard's first love. Janet felt this, sighed, and then laughed at herself for sighing.

To old Jenny's dismay, Richard one day caused his bed and his furniture to be moved into the room in which she had passed her first night at Singleton Hall—the haunted

room ! It was in vain that she begged him not to sleep there ; telling him that he would see something that might " well nigh drive him crazy."

Poor Jenny retired to bed betimes, after having looked in at " the child," trying in vain to turn him from his resolve. She left him to listen to the boisterous, roaring wind, and pelting rain, as he stretched himself in a large arm-chair before a blazing fire of wood and coal ; Ambrosia in his thoughts ; dreams lazily passing before his mind's eye. It must be confessed that as night wore on, when the gnawing of rats and mysterious sighing of wind through crannies were to be heard, that Richard's soul dwelt not so intently on Ambrosia as it had done in the beginning of the evening. Tales of supernatural horrors were presented to him by his officious memory ; even Mr. Plimpton Sawtre's ballad, " Fair Rosalie and the Spectre of the Glen," bore a part with other terrific and ghastly stories, in scaring Richard Singleton ; who began to wish he had never thought of dwelling in that fatal room.

In order to disperse his fears he took up a volume of Tom Jones : picturing Tom Jones under his own form, Sophia Western under that of Miss Savory. It was in vain that he tried to bury himself in the tale ; his eyes *would* fix themselves on the red marks on the side of the chimney-piece ; marks said to be those of blood ; his ears *would* listen to the strange sounds within the house ; his mind *would* turn to Jenny's oft repeated story of all she had seen and heard in that very room. It looked so airy and pleasant by day ; by night, it appeared gloomy, horrible, and supernatural. The dark red curtains absorbed the light ; the dingy old pictures did the same.

Richard thought of bed ; he found he dared not move from his chair. He tried to sing ; the sound of his voice startled him. He fixed his eyes on the door, expecting

every minute to see it open, and give entrance to the murderous shade of his ancestor.

Suddenly a cloud of dust filled the room, a loud noise accompanying it. Richard started up with staring eyes. A large picture, "The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence," had fallen to the ground from the rotten cord which had borne it. Richard had been so scared by the expression of some of the figures in the painting, that he had turned his back to it, and it was long before he looked round to see what had caused the noise and dust. The candles had been overturned by the falling picture: a mysterious gloom hung over the room.

At dead of night Jenny was aroused by a loud knocking at her door.

"It's Master Richard!" she cried, as she hurried on her clothes.

Lying at the door she found Singleton, his hair wet with sweat, his face full of horror.

The old woman did all she could for him; but it was long before he returned to life. When he did so he spoke wildly, trembling as if he had the ague, and looking about him as though he knew not where he was.

It was long before Richard fully recovered. He did not return to the haunted room; and he would never tell what he had there beheld. He said that he would prevail on his father to pull down the wing of the house which contained that room, and that the portrait of the builder of the hall and founder of the family ought to be burnt. It was only to old Jenny that he said so much, adding that nothing on earth would induce him again to look on the picture of the first Singleton.

In the beginning of the summer which followed Richard's adventure in the haunted wing of Singleton Hall, his father returned to England, Richard being then about

sixteen years of age. Mr. Small, in a letter, announced the expected arrival to him—an arrival which set young Singleton's mind to work on many matters. He wondered what his father might be like in mind and body, having but a shadowy recollection of him : remembering well that he used sometimes to pet him, at others to treat him roughly ; but not being able to call his outward man to his remembrance. Then, too, he pondered about his mother, of whom his father had never written in the few letters Richard had received from him, and of whom young Singleton had not the most faint trace in his memory. He often wondered if she was coming too ; what she might be like, or whether she might not, perchance, be dead—dead before he was old enough to know of his loss. Next, he would cogitate as to the likelihood of his being called from Dr. Savory's to receive his father. He hoped not ; he could not endure the idea of being “torn from Ambrosia ;” his passion for Miss Savory being to him a very grave affair, although in the eyes of others, or of the fair Ambrosia herself, it would have appeared a most laughable matter.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE NABOB.

RICHARD was not called away from Ambrosia's side to meet Mr. Singleton, who did not appear to be dying with impatience to see his son, leaving him to love and study until the midsummer holidays dismissed him to his home and his father.

It was on a lovely evening that the coach stopped at the end of the lane, and that Richard and his portmanteau



being there set down, he found a boy and a wheelbarrow in attendance. The portmanteau being duly placed in the barrow, was trundled briskly off by the boy, Richard sauntering down the cool, shady lane. His heart beat nervously at the idea of meeting his father. He stopped from time to time in order to collect himself. When he at length beheld the Hall, he fell into a tremor, and it was long before he could prevail on himself to go up to his own home—there to behold his own parent.

At length, with parched mouth and trembling hands, he reached the house; noting, in spite of nervousness, how all around him was changed. Weeds had disappeared; everything was in first-rate rich man's order. An open carriage and four stood before the house door; on the steps sat a fat Danish dog, and lounged a couple of footmen in crimson and gold.

Richard started, and his heart beat loudly, when, on looking towards the haunted wing, he perceived that the roof was gone—that the wing itself was more than half pulled down.

“Mr. Singleton, sir?” inquired a footman, as Richard walked into the hall of his father's home.

“Yes,” returned Richard, casting a look around him on the hall table, the hall chairs with the Singleton crest, the carpeted staircase, and the fat butler, Mr. Rumley, who appeared to usher him to his father's presence.

Mr. Rumley marched slowly along, like unto an elephant.

Mr. Rumley's visage was red, saying “strong home-brewed” most unmistakably; his stout calves were habited in black silk stockings, and his great feet trod as though corns on the soles thereof were rife.

After journeying over many yards of soft carpet, Mr. Rumley opened the door of a large room on the first story, and announced, in a plethoric voice, “*Muster* Richard

Singleton!" leaving Richard to the meeting with his father. Richard felt desolate, and as though he had lost a friend, when Mr. Rumley quitted the room and gently shut the door.

Young Singleton had to walk the whole length of the long room in order to stand before his parent, who was seated at the farther end playing a game at chess with an Indian; both silently marching and counter-marching the tall, carved, green and white men on a sandal-wood and ebony field of battle.

Mr. Singleton looked up as Richard drew near, nodded, pointed to a chair, and said lazily—

"Sit down and be quiet till we have finished our game."

Richard did as he was bid, glad to have time to compose himself, and to examine his father.

Mr. Singleton was a tall, gaunt man, about fifty years of age; large boned, sallow in the extreme; his eyes were of a leaden gray, the whites tinged with yellow; his features were large but regular; his grizzled hair was hidden by powder, and dressed in a high tuft on his yellow, wrinkled forehead; his closely-shaven beard left a black hue over his heavy jaw and sunken cheek; the expression of his face was restless, as though he every minute feared that something might come to light which he had rather should remain in the dark.

Mr. Singleton was clad in a long nankeen dressing-gown, nankeen breeches, and white waistcoat. His silk stockings were so transparent as to show the skin beneath them; his shirt frill and cravat were of the finest Indian muslin; a large emerald, set round with diamonds, decked the frill; whilst one diamond of great price sparkled on his little finger.

Richard, after duly inspecting his father, felt that his heart did not warm towards him, and that his nervousness

was in no wise chased away by Mr. Singleton's air and expression. He next turned his attention towards the Indian.

"That *must* be Mahomet," thought young Singleton; and so it was—flat turban, blue tunic, wicked look and all.

After some twenty minutes' silence Mr. Singleton gaped, and, saying "Checkmate!" gave Mahomet's tall green king a fillip which would have sent his majesty rolling on the carpet, if Mahomet, with an odious smile, had not caught the piece as it fell.

Mr. Singleton then pushed back his chair, leant back in it, crossed his legs, plunged his hands into his nankeen side pockets, and, without looking at Richard, asked him how old he was.

Having been duly answered, Mr. Singleton raised his eyes, fixed them for an instant on his son, again cast them down, became of a paler yellow than he was wont to be, frowned, bit his nails, and then, after a long silence, during which he seemed to be unpleasantly ruminating, said—

"Ring the bell, Mahomet; I'll take my drive.—You can come, if you like," he added to Richard, after a pause.

Mr. Rumley now appeared, followed by Goldup, Mr. Singleton's valet—a long, parchment-like, knavish-looking being, who bore a loose green velvet coat, trimmed with fur and frogs, in which he enveloped his chilly master, and then departed with the nankeen dressing-gown, after having duly handed hat and gloves to Mr. Singleton.

"Not remembaar me, *sare*?" inquired Mahomet obsequiously of Richard, whilst Mr. Singleton was being dressed in his velvet coat.

"I think you are Mahomet," replied Richard.

"Ah! *ye-es*, *sare*. Very much grown, you are. Know you when you were very *sma-al*, I did, *sare*!"

"What are you chattering about there, you black devil

you?" inquired Mr. Singleton, with another gape. "Give me your arm. Are you coming, Richard?"

Richard stammered something about being dusty and tired; in consequence of which his father, without another word, walked out of the room, followed by Mr. Rumley, and leaving Richard to his own society.

He drew to the window to see Mr. Singleton depart for his evening drive.

"Coming out!" called some one, unseen by Richard.

Forward darted two footmen. One tore open the carriage door; bang, bang, bang! down came the steps. Footmen at attention on either side. Mr. Singleton stepped lazily forth; slowly mounted into his carriage; let himself fall on the seat among outspread cloaks, which cloaks Mahomet wrapped carefully round his master's legs, taking his place on the seat opposite to Mr. Singleton.

Bang! went the steps—bang! went the door. The footmen climbed to the seat behind; the postillions, in creamy leathers, crimson jackets, and gold tasselled jockey caps, spurred the fine grays; the outrider with his long whip trotted on in front; and Mr. Singleton, idly lolling in his corner, was borne off for his evening airing.

Mr. Rumley, on the door-steps beneath Richard, shading his eyes from the evening sun, gazed awhile after the brilliant yellow barouche, and the portly Danish-dog trotting beside it; then turned, and heavily re-entered the house; whilst Richard asked himself, "What was to be done next?"

As though in answer to his own question, he cast his eyes around the room: a room which he had always remembered as being somewhat bare of furniture; as having no carpet; as being ornamented with a few dark old paintings in oak frames, as well as by a heavy carved table, half-a-dozen high-backed chairs, a cabinet, and a leather helmet

of the civil war days. Richard now beheld it well carpeted; the old furniture superseded by modern, spider-legged, short-waisted, unpicturesque and ugly chairs and tables. The dogs in the fire-place were turned out for a grate; the fine old lattice windows and their stone uprights having given place to the most approved modern sashes. A large fire was adding its heat to the heat of summer; indeed fires were burning all over the house, in order to correct the dampness of the English climate. Richard made the tour of the house. No old furniture was to be seen: it was replaced by the richest furniture the meagre cold taste of the age could bring forth. The contents of the Hall were all marked by an unmistakeable, expensive, upholsterer-like air; an upholsterer having, in fact, been let loose, "*totally regardless of expense*," to do his worst against Mr. Singleton's arrival at the Hall.

Richard had looked about him, hoping to see signs of a lady; but no such signs met his eye. Everything was cold, stiff, bachelor-like, and rich. Money, money, money, had left its mark everywhere; you might see at a glance that the house was the property of a very wealthy, wifeless, and tasteless man. Richard rightly concluded that his mother was not there.

Singleton sought the room in the haunted wing. On reaching it he beheld the bright blood-red sun shining calmly into it through the closed windows, casting their image on the wall opposite to them, and giving a kind of silent melancholy to the chamber, well in keeping with the ghostly horrors of which it was said to be the scene.

As he opened the door, Richard was startled at viewing the first Singleton standing opposite to him at the further end of the room: his eyes, so full of iniquity, fixed steadily on him; his heavy eyebrows knit; his pale face looking doubly pale in the gloom of that end of the room in which

he stood. Richard's agitation vanished on perceiving that the object of his dread was no other than the full-length portrait of his ancestor, which, having been deposed from the spot where it had hung since the days in which it was painted "long, long ago," had been placed against the wall in the haunted room.

Young Singleton felt a shudder steal over him as he looked on the painting. The face of the figure was so coldly wicked, giving sign of such secret deeds of evil, and such a forced outward calm, that Richard would have given much to know the life and thoughts of that man—now mere dust as to the body, and what as to the soul?

He was forced to confess to himself that there was a great likeness, both in feature and expression, between that Singleton and his father. As he looked at the blood-marks on the chimneypiece, he connected them, he knew not why, with his father. He called to mind what he had seen in that room on the stormy night he had passed therein, musing until his heart beat at the strange noises he heard breaking the silence of the unfurnished, deserted chamber. After one more look at the picture, he turned to depart; and as he did so, for an instant he beheld in the red rays bursting, full of dancing motes, through the lattice, the form of the first Singleton! There it stood, looking corpse-like, ghastly, as though it filled the room with the cold dampness and silence of a grave—as though it would freeze the very sunbeams around it.

Richard gasped and drew back; then passed his hand over his staring eyes. When he next fixed them on the spot where he had beheld the phantom, he saw naught but the red sunbeams and the dancing motes.

"It was fancy," he told himself; "the effect of looking so steadily at the portrait; the impression was on my brain, and I still saw the picture as I turned. But then, the eyes

were those of a dead man ; between his hands he held——  
Oh ! it was fancy—I was deceived.”

Thus reflecting, Richard hurried from the unfurnished deserted room, and rang for Mr. Rumley, desiring to know which was to be his room. Mr. Rumley sent Mr. Goldup to his assistance, who, skipping like a will-'o-the-wisp, conducted him to his apartment—unpacked his portmanteau—brought him warm water—gave him an idea of the modes to be observed at Singleton Hall—assisted, whether Richard would or not, at his toilette—and all this with such speed, precision, briskness, and dexterity, as no good, honest, plodding servant ever possessed. There was not a wrinkle about Mr. Goldup's monkey face which did not crumple itself into a rascally shape. Now those wrinkles were legion ; and the visage they covered was, to those who could read aright, as a parchment, scribbled all over with the words rascal and cheat.

Richard did not pay much attention to Mr. Goldup's torrent of words, being intent on his own thoughts—pondering as to why the haunted wing was being pulled down, and feeling that he could never be sufficiently easy with his father to ask *him* the reason of it. This being the case, he, with some hesitation, asked Mr. Goldup if he could tell him why the wing was to come to the ground, and what alterations were to be made.

“ Can't say, sir ! Dare say Mr. Mahomet can tell you,” replied Mr. Goldup, making a leg.

He spoke the above words very tartly, especially “ Mr. Mahomet ;” moreover, with an offended air, as though he thought Mr. Mahomet was by Mr. Singleton treated more confidentially than was Mr. Goldup ; whereas, if matters were as they ought to be, the aforesaid Messrs. Mahomet and Goldup ought forthwith to change places.

Richard did not notice this, and, his toilette being completed, he repaired to the drawing-room.

The upholsterer had given vent very largely to his ideas in this drawing-room, which smelt of cedar, sandal-wood, and new furniture. Richard there beheld straight-legged card-tables spread out, four spider-legged chairs to each; long thin silver candlesticks on the green cloth table-tops; carved Indian counters, and fish of mother-of-pearl lying in readiness to mark triumphs to come.

There was a large shield-like convex mirror, supported by a gilt eagle, hanging between two windows. From this mirror sprang branches, in which wax lights were burning, adding to the light which was shed from a large glass chandelier pendant from the carved ceiling—a ceiling which, in its richness and beauty, matched but ill with the pale pink paper, pink velvet curtains, and meagre looking objects of furniture.

On a pink velvet sofa, half Greek, half Egyptian, Mr. Singleton was lying, taking his rest until his expected guests should arrive. On a chair beside him sat Mahomet, eyeing his sleeping master as a boa might eye a rabbit.

Mr. Goldup had certainly done his best in the “getting up” of Mr. Singleton, whose forehead tuft was powdered lightly but plentifully, as though the fairies had blown small snow-flakes on it; whilst his garments were faultlessly put on. Mr. Singleton wore a short-waisted blue coat, lined and faced with white silk; buff kerseymere breeches and waistcoat, every button of which waistcoat was a fine diamond; his knee and shoe buckles being also of diamonds. Richard, as he entered the room, bethought him how different it was to his Ambrosia’s parlour. He sighed as he thought of the happy moments he had passed in that parlour, whilst everything in his father’s house made him sad: there was such an air of cold, heavy, heartless wealth about it.



The look he cast on his father as he slept, watched over by dark Mahomet, did not raise his spirits. Mr. Singleton looked, with his uneasy expression of face, so like the founder of the family, that Richard could not help confounding them together in his mind; so that to him they were as one and the same man. His heart did not yearn towards his parent. He felt a dread of him which was half supernatural—felt, too, that he could *never* be at his ease with him, or repose confidence in him.

As for Mahomet, he appeared in young Singleton's eyes as an evil spirit, in whose possession his father was—a snake-like fiend, to be avoided and guarded against. The servants had given Mahomet the nickname of “master's dirty dog;” why, they could not have said if asked: they felt him to be so, and so they called him.

After a while, the sound of carriage wheels, crunching on the gravel drive, awoke Mr. Singleton from his nap. On perceiving Richard, he said, without looking at him however—

“Remember, you are free to come and go, and to do just as you think fit whilst you are here. I shall not interfere with you in any way.”

Richard stammered out his thanks. To his father he could not speak in his natural manner; with him he felt even more uneasy than he did with his old Bogie, Mr. Blenkins.

Mr. Rumley now threw open the drawing-room door, giving admittance to his own tall, portly person, and announcing in a loud voice—

“Sir Thof'lus and Lady Fotheringay, *Muster* Fotheringay, *Muster Hedgar* Brownlow!”

Thus announced, Sir Theophilus, with his lady, followed by his son, and his son's friend, made their appearance; Mr. Singleton stepping to meet them, and receiving them

smilingly and courteously. The smiles he wore did not suit the expression of his face, which they became as a wreath of rosebuds would become a skull. Courtesy, however, sat well on him; and so thought Richard, as his father presented him to his guests.

"Uncommon fine eyes, 'pon honour!" cried Lady Fotheringay, staring at Richard as he made his bow, and blushed at her words no less than at her stare.

Lady Fotheringay was of the class "dasher." Tall; upright; cheeks, chin, and elbows rouged deeply; eyebrows blacked; flashing eyes; black wig; fine arms; fine and very visible bust; forty years of age; loud voice; and a bold stare: such is the description of Lady Fotheringay.

Sir Theophilus, her spouse, some ten years older than her ladyship, was a small, fair, meek man, entirely eclipsed by the "dasher;" but being of a sensible mind, and one who could talk agreeably and reasonably when she was not present. Even then, however, his words were but few; a gentle smile and a meaning bow standing him in good stead by way of speech.

Sir Theophilus was one of the county members; a post which he filled ably and to the satisfaction of his constituents; a post which he felt proud to occupy. In *those* days to be a Member of Parliament was both an honour and a distinction.

Young Fotheringay had just left Winchester, to pass the time between school and college with his parents at Drayton Court. He was a bold, dashing looking young gentleman; his mother's counterpart and darling.

His friend Brownlow had, like himself, left Winchester, and was looking forward to the University; pending his going thither he was on a visit to the Fotheringays.

More company continued to arrive, announced by fat Mr. Rumley, whose corns became painful through much standing.

Tea and coffee having been carried round, the business of the evening began ; and a very serious business it was—no less than heavy, downright gambling. The tables were soon furnished with players, Mr. Singleton sitting down to play whist with Lady Fotheringay as partner, and Mahomet standing by to mark for him and shuffle his cards.

The buzz of talking was now hushed ; but few words were heard from time to time, and those were all spoken in suppressed tones : all related to the game and to its chances.

Richard viewed with astonishment the silver, the gold, the notes lost and won by the gamblers ; never before, in all his life, had he beheld so much money.

He looked, too, on his father. Mr. Singleton, unlike the rest of the players, seemed to take but small interest in the game ; to win or lose with great coolness and indifference ; playing to kill time ; doing so mechanically, looking gloomy and abstracted all the while.

Young Fotheringay and Brownlow looked on, and betted on the game ; or talked to Richard in a corner, not to disturb the gamesters ; they being apt to become ferocious when so disturbed.

In Brownlow, Richard discovered the little fellow who had so ardently longed to fight him on his arrival at Boscobelle Academy.

As Richard felt somewhat ashamed of his *début* at that seat of learning, he did not reveal his discovery to Brownlow ; who, however, later in the evening, became aware that Singleton was the irritable little gentleman who had caused such a disturbance in the school by his onslaught on the boys.

Brownlow, being as good-natured as ever, made no allusions to the memorable scene at the doctor's : he merely greeted Richard as an old friend, giving him a hearty shake

of the hand, and saying, in Winchester tongue, that he hoped they would be as great "*pax*" as ever. Richard, taking it for granted that "*pax*" meant something friendly, said he hoped so too.

There was much talk between Fotheringay and Brownlow of horses, driving, cricketing, boating, sparring, and swimming.

The two Winchester boys soon found out that the Boscobelle boy knew nothing of manly sports and pastimes, Fotheringay looking down upon him accordingly; whilst Brownlow, pitying him, played his old part, trying to bring him out, and making him promise to go to a cricket-match, which was to take place in a few days in the park at Drayton Court.

"You'll soon learn to play, old fellow," he said; "and when once you begin, you'll never leave off again."

Fotheringay amiably amused himself by showing off his superiority to Singleton; recounting anecdotes of his own strength and prowess, much to the annoyance of Richard, who at last walked off and gave his attention to the gamblers.

"Slow coach!" quoth Fotheringay, as Singleton left them. "Regular case of t'other school."

Richard had not said to the two Wintonians, "You're nasty things, and I hate you," as he would have done in his childhood; but although his tongue was mute, his soul uttered that sentiment.

It was some time since he had felt the uneasy gnawing of envy. At Norly he had been free from rivals. All the Doctor's friends were wont to flatter and pet him; at Norly he met no boys of his own age to show him where he stood as regarded manliness and strength; the two qualities which now made his heart bitter against Fotheringay and Brownlow.

Richard looked at them as they continued laughing and talking. As he did so, his face wore an expression not far removed from the expression of Mahomet's ; with so much malice and hatred did he eye the two friends.

Richard hated Fotheringay, not only for his gifts, but for his vaunting. He hated Brownlow, as in the old school-days, for his very kindness and goodness towards himself ; as well as for his strength, his stature, his openness of heart, and his manliness of manner.

Between twelve and one o'clock, Mr. Rumley and the two footmen again made their appearance, bearing supper on silver waiters ; a supper consisting of various hot dishes, accompanied by iced wines and lemonade.

The company of gamblers arose from their cards and did full justice to the supper ; when, being duly refreshed, they again, one and all, sat down to their withering pastime.

Lady Fotheringay, having had a run of ill luck, scowled and pouted, without any attempt to hide her feelings. Her loud voice was to be heard reproving her partner for mistakes by him committed ; whilst she actually, and without disguise, cursed her ill luck. Mr. Singleton, who had lost quite as much as her ladyship, was cool and collected. Money, as money, was to him without charms ; whilst to her, winning and losing were, from love of lucre, matters of life and death.

After supper, Sir Theophilus took his departure, as did the two Wintonians, who had attacked the viands and wines with great vigour. Rumley, who seemed to be a particular friend of theirs, had largely supplied them with "*swipes*," as in Wickhamist's slang they called the ale.

Richard remained in the drawing-room, alternately musing and giving his attention to what was passing around him.

Daylight shone in through the open windows, contrasting with the yellow light of the wax tapers ; and the birds were

blithely singing their morning songs before the company left their cards and returned to their homes. Before they did so, Mr. Rumley limped into the room with the two drowsy young footmen, in order to supply Mr. Singleton and his guests with tea and coffee.

As they sipped their warm draughts, Richard remarked how wan, pale, and sallow they looked. He noted how old Lady Fotheringay appeared, her rouge having quitted her cheeks to redden her white kid gloves, with which she had rubbed her face in the agitation of play.

His father looked cadaverous. Richard could hardly believe that the beings before him were the same people he had seen arrive the evening before.

There was much putting up of winnings ; and there were many light and empty purses. There were, moreover, more unhappy than happy creatures among the departing company.

As the last carriage drove off, Richard saw from the window a healthy, sturdy milkmaid, pail on head, and stool in hand, stepping along through the fresh dew to milk her cows. The rising sun cast a long shadow behind her ; the sweet air rang with her merry song.

“ Ah ! ” thought Richard, “ *she* is happy ! ” Then turning again to the heated drawing-room and waning lights, looking so sickly by day, he wished his father good morning, and sought his own room.

Singleton failed not to fall asleep with Ambrosia’s thimble in his hand ; but thoughts of love were, on that fine summer’s morning, sadly disturbed by thoughts of envy, discontent, and hatred.

It was late before Richard arose, heated and drowsy from having passed the night out of bed. He learnt from Mr. Goldup that Mr. Singleton never got up till three o’clock ; that he always dined at a late and fashionable hour

—to wit, five o'clock ; and that it was his custom never to go to rest till daybreak. Mr. Goldup, moreover, informed Richard that Mr. Singleton was in the habit of giving such parties as that at which Richard had been present, two or three times a week ; that he likewise gave great dinners from time to time ; that all these dinners and parties were got up for the purpose of gaming ; and that the neighbourhood of Singleton Hall was the most “*infaymous*” place in the world for gambling.

“In point of fact, sir,” said Mr. Goldup, standing by to entertain Richard during his breakfast, “there never was such a place ! To see the sums and sums as changes hands in the course of one night, would make your hair stand on end. ’Tain’t merely the gentlemen ; the ladies is quite as bad every bit. There’s my Lady Fotheringay (this is *quite* between ourselves, sir) : that lady, sir, ’s a blackleg *spiled*. They *do* say as she once attempted to make away with herself, just as any man might, in consequence of severe losses at play, sir : shot off a pistol at her head ; but the powder was damp, or something, and it missed fire. Some says her la’ship loaded it herself, and put the ball in afore the powder. Any way she came to think better of it ; and not long after, may be a night or so, her la’ship had a run of luck, covered her losses, and bagged a good round sum besides. Poor Sir *Thof’lis* takes on about it, they say, and well he may ; but, lor’ ! he’s one of them gentlemen as can’t say bo ! to a goose : a good master though, very good ; his people haven’t got a fault to find with him ; all gives him the best of *kracters* ; and I really believe he deserves it !”

“Ah !” replied Richard, wishing Mr. Goldup would depart, and leave him to his meditations. Mr. Goldup, however, did not do so : after having handed toast to Richard with a bow, and having then poised himself on one hip, toes well turned out, he continued :—

“I’m given to understand, sir, that Mr. Singleton, my excellent master, manages matters far differently from poor Lady Fotheringay. I have been confidentially assured, sir, that your good father lays out a certain sum yearly on the pleasures of the card table—a sum adequate to cover all expenses. If Mr. Singleton loses this sum by the end of the year, why, he looks on it as a mere flea-bite; if he increases it by good luck, why, well and good!”

Mr. Goldup had gained this information by listening at the door, when, his master and Lawyer Small being closeted together, Mr. Goldup had heard Mr. Singleton say as much in the way of conversation to Mr. Small.

Mr. Goldup was a great listener at doors, and a great peeper through the keyholes of the same; coming and going on such expeditions with the noiseless agility of a long-armed ape.

Richard felt no interest whatever in Mr. Goldup’s revelations; but Mr. Goldup being much interested in his own fine flow of words, and finding such a silent listener, continued to pour forth his discourse with great self-satisfaction.

“Bless me, sir!” he said at last, peering from the window, “some one for you, I believe.”

“For *me*?” cried Richard, jumping up, and feeling interested as soon as he himself was mentioned: “Who is it?”

“Young Mr. Brownlow, sir; with a cricket bat over his shoulder, and his hand full of stumps.—Beg pardon, sir, but if you’re going to play, and I can be of any use, Mr. Singleton won’t want me afore three, and I’m quite an ad-dept at the sport!” said Mr. Goldup, his eyes brightening as he rubbed his long monkey hands, quite delighted at the idea of finding an opportunity of running about and exciting himself.



"Here I am," cried Brownlow, as he walked in: "come to take you in hand, Master Richard! How are you, old fellow? Ah! Goldup, how are *you*? You're a cricketer, I know of old. Do you remember the matches at my father's when you were with the Howards?"

"To be sure I do, sir! Happy to assist you in giving Mr. Richard a notion of the game. I've no doubt he'll soon become quite *thoosiastical* over it, as we all do; don't us, sir?"

"That we do!" returned Brownlow, laughing; and, accompanied by Flibbertigibbet Mr. Goldup, he marched Richard off to the park to take his first lesson in cricket.

Brownlow looked forward with great pleasure to making "a man" of Singleton. He had still the same old feeling that he had at Boscobelle Academy—that it was a doleful thing to see Richard so reserved, so void of all manly feeling and gaiety, so wrapt up in himself. His good heart felt pain whenever he thought of him, just as it would have felt if he had thought on a person suffering from toothache, *tic douloureux*, or any other painful infirmity; wherefore he made unto himself a "*mission*" (so much the fashion in these latter days), which "*mission*" was to undertake the regeneration of Richard: a "*mission*" to wash a black man white; to change the soul by means of bodily acts. Sanguine Brownlow!

Richard felt a great desire to be a cricketer; not, however, through any love of that sport, but only because Brownlow and Fotheringay could play and he could not. He determined to work hard, and to throw them both into the shade by his prowess. Right glad was he that Brownlow had undertaken to teach him; though he felt no gratitude towards him for this act of kindness, deeming that Brownlow was "patronizing" him, and hating the kind fellow accordingly.

Honest Brownlow neither saw nor understood such paltry

feelings as those entertained by Singleton ; whose cricketing education he now undertook with great vigour, aided by Mr. Goldup.

Richard brought the same spirit to cricket which, in schoolboy days, he had brought to marbles : he was fractious, peevish, and quarrelsome. Years had rather modified his temper, or more rather, Richard, being older, did not allow it to come forth *quite* so nakedly as of yore : still it was there.

Young Singleton imagined that a youth of his talents would have picked up such a mechanical game as cricket in "no time : " not taking it into consideration that to be skilful in bodily exercises is not such an easy matter as "*intellectual*" beings are pleased, oft-times, to think it. In the first place, a certain fund of strength and activity, together with a good eye and a good temper, are very necessary. Richard, possessing none of these, found cricket a very different affair from what he had painted it to himself ; anything but a sport or an amusement.

Mr. Richard found a bat very troublesome to handle ; quarrelled with Brownlow's bowling, because he missed every ball ; swore at the wicket, because more than once he himself demolished it ; besides finding that to face and catch a swift flying cricket-ball tried his "pluck" most unpleasantly.

"You'll never make anything of Mr. Richard, I'm afraid, sir !" whispered Mr. Goldup to persevering Brownlow, as Singleton, having succeeded in catching the ball, and having done so awkwardly, had thrown it down, wringing his right hand, and muttering—"Confound that beast of a ball ! D—n it altogether !"

"I'll try Goldup," returned Brownlow to the agile valet : "*nil desperandum !*"

"Quite so, sir : a very true saying ; as I've heard all French sayings are."

Singleton having succeeded in getting his finger split by a ball, the game came to a conclusion for that day. Brownlow assured Richard that he had made a very good beginning indeed; that he would soon be "up to the thing," and that all he wanted was a little more "devil;" but that that would come in time. "Good fun, ain't it?" he added in conclusion.

"Yes," replied Richard; who, being sensitive to pain, was ready to cry over his wounded finger; feeling quite sick, and thinking cricket the most stupid affair he had ever been engaged in; detesting it in his heart, yet determined to persevere for the sake of outdoing Brownlow and Fotheringay.

Brownlow took leave of his friend, promising to come another day; and assuring Richard that he would bring Fotheringay when "we're a little more advanced."

Richard remained lying beneath an oak tree, nursing his finger; feeling rather the worse for fatigue; wrathful in mind; uneasy and moody, yet not knowing why he was so. Although he was well read in classic lore, well versed in history, perfectly at home with every English poet who ever wrote, Singleton had not the slightest acquaintance with his own soul and passions. Whilst he was cultivating his taste to the utmost, his soul was left to run riot. Less of the *belles lettres*, and more of moral philosophy, would have done Richard much good. He liked literature, and could not away with moral philosophy; wherefore his own soul was a region better known to the Evil One than to himself.

Religion being quite out of fashion in those days, except for "Methodists," young Singleton went no further therein than did his neighbours; that is to say, he went to church once every Sunday, as to a sort of ecclesiastical parade. Religion was not suffered, therefore, to open to his view the

dark corners of his soul, or to show him the corruptions and the sources of misery at work therein.

Young Singleton, in short, bid fair to be one of those "*intellectual*" men who know everything but themselves.



## CHAPTER VI.

### SECOND LOVE.

WHEN the day came for the great cricket match at Drayton Court, Richard betook himself thither as a spectator, though not as a player.

The weather was lovely: a light breeze drove the fleecy clouds across the deep blue sky; the sun shone merrily on players and on lookers on; the snow-white cricketing tent came out brightly against the green grass and trees.

Lady Fotheringay's loud voice, and eke that of her eldest son, was to be heard both far and near. The "*Dasher*" longed herself to make one of the Drayton eleven; but as that could not be, she was obliged to be content to look on and watch the game; her fierce dark eyes gleaming from beneath her straw hat, which was lined with green silk, and cocked in masculine guise.

This hat she took off from time to time, playing with her black Brutus as a man would with his own locks; whilst she settled her chin in her muslin cravat, and made critical remarks on the batting and bowling.

Sir Theophilus glided about among the ladies present, whispering delicate compliments, making all to whom he spoke pleased with themselves, and, as a natural consequence, pleased with Sir Theophilus likewise.

Richard's attention was much taken up with Almeria, the fair daughter of Sir Theophilus. He longed to be intro-

duced to her; for at the time of which I am writing, to speak to any one without an introduction was impossible.

Richard, in spite of his admiration, had not coolness enough to beg to be presented to the young lady; who, being a year older than Singleton, might probably have looked upon him as only "a boy."

Richard gazed at Almeria more than he did at the cricketers. He thought a damsel of seventeen, with her dark blue eyes, the auburn curls on her forehead, and the rosy bloom on her soft cheek, a fairer object to view than muscular males rushing about in cricketing jackets. Before the Drayton eleven had *enfoncés* their opponents, Almeria had almost, if not quite, done the same to Richard's first love, the fair Ambrosia.

How he envied Tommy Fotheringay, Almeria's little brother; and how he envied the Rev. Septimus Barnett, tutor to Tommy!

Well he might! for Tommy and the Rev. Septimus abode by her side, talked with her, laughed with her, and flirted with her: that is to say, the tutor did, whilst his pupil served as chaperone, stalking-horse, blind, and all those cunning sort of contrivances which, generally speaking, deceive no one but those who use them.

Singleton hovered near them. As he was admiring the way in which her pure white muslin dress, and little straw bonnet lined with pink, set off her snowy skin and blooming cheeks, he heard Almeria express her approbation of manly sports, and of those who joined in them.

This was gall and wormwood to Richard, who felt inclined madly to seize a bat, and therewith to plunge, like a Quixote, among the cricketers. He had not seen Almeria's eyes as she made the remark, or he might have perceived that she had made it only to *agacer* the divine, who had no vocation for sports and pastimes.

Septimus Barnett was a tall, slight, white and red young man, with dark eyes and hair, and a soft voice. He had but just taken orders, and the sole charge of Tommy Fotheringay's education: a slighter charge than that of a parish; Tommy being meek and tractable like his papa. Sir Theophilus had given Septimus this employment, besides the promise of a certain living in his gift, because he was son of an old friend of Sir Theophilus, who had ruined himself, and, as the phrase is, "gone to the dogs."

The match being over, to the triumph of one side, and the casting down of the other, the whole company adjourned to the house to a three o'clock dinner.

Richard took his seat silently and moodily, having proceeded to the dining-room with other *belleless* "boys," whilst Almeria had done so with "grown-up people;" the "boys" being told off as a side-table squad. All the young gentlemen, Singleton excepted, thought it much better fun to be there than at the great table; but he, with stolen glances at his new love and the tutor, who had contrived to sit beside her, felt full of wrath and bitterness—anything but hilarious. His soul said of the Rev. Septimus Barnett, so smiling and bland, as well as of the sturdy cricketers, so hungry and gay—"You're nasty things, and I hate you!"

Brownlow, who was chief over the boys' table, tried to rouse Singleton; and thinking that his moodiness proceeded from not having taken part in the match, talked of that which was to take place the year following on the same spot, and hoped Richard would then be one of the Drayton eleven. He proposed his pupil's health, which the "boys" drank with a kind of suppressed uproariousness. All this rendered Singleton only the more moody. His moodiness turned to irritability, when, dinner being over, and the gentlemen's after-dinner "*sederunt*" being

cut short, the dining-room was turned into a ball-room. Two fiddles, a flute, and a harp were cantoned in a corner, and a country-dance line was formed down the centre.

"I say, Singleton!" said Brownlow, looking flushed and good-natured; "now's your time. I know all the pretty girls present; so make your choice, and I'll introduce you. What do you say to Miss Almeria? Come and cut out the parson!"

"No, thank you: I hate dancing," replied Singleton, turning away pettishly.

"Oh! then, *I'll* do the deed, my man. Adieu!"

With these words, Brownlow engaged Almeria, taking his place in line opposite his partner, and figuring away with great glee; leaving Richard to fume in a corner. Singleton would have given his fine large black eyes to have been in Brownlow's place; but poor Singleton had never learnt to dance; and dancing in those days involved "steps," which could only be learnt by being duly taught. There was no walking and bobbing and sliding through a figure lazily—anyhow; dancing required vigour and spirit, one country-dance being equal to twelve quadrilles, which are equal to six waltzes, which are equal to five polkas.

Richard observed that whenever Almeria and Septimus met in the course of the dance, there was a certain consciousness between them; whereupon he ground his teeth at the fresh-coloured tutor. Richard perceived more than did the "Dasher," who was dashing about the dance with a tanned gray-headed colonel, whose fine silk-stockinged calves and small feet carried him capering along, to his partner's infinite satisfaction.

Sir Theophilus was taking a gentle doze, with a meek expression on his sleeping face; young Fotheringay had a veil over his brain; and Tommy, having made himself sick

by stealing rich viands from the dishes, as they left the dining-room, had retired to his bed. The only pair of watchful eyes directed on Almeria and the Rev. Septimus Barnett, therefore, were those of Richard, who drank in love and hatred through his orbs.

"How I *do* hate that fresh-coloured fool!" thought he, as he fancied that the said fresh-coloured fool had squeezed Almeria's hand in a *poussette*. Perhaps he had; and there was Richard standing by, a "boy," unable to dance, and quite unobserved by the new idol he had set up in his heart. Having succeeded in making himself as miserable and irritable as he possibly could, Richard made his bow to Lady Fotheringay, who gave him two fingers to shake, saying—

"Make my compliments to your father. Always glad to see you over here, you know, whenever you like to come. Good night to you!"

Richard walked home by the light of the moon, somewhat consoled by Lady Fotheringay's invitation to go over to Drayton whenever he liked.

As he sped along, he passed beneath a huge beech-tree, on the bright gray trunk of which the moon shone full, giving to Singleton's view a heart and letter A cut on the bark the summer before in honour of Ambrosia.

"How silly!" thought Richard. "However, A will do for Almeria. Ah! she *is* beautiful. I should like to throttle that grinning parson."

Thus soliloquising, Singleton reached the Hall, where his father and his friends were engaged in their nightly card-playing.

A whisper had gone abroad, by whom or how it was first started was not known, that Mr. Singleton's conscience would not allow him to rest at night. It is not improbable that Mr. Goldup might have been the first to whisper the



whisper, as having been whispered to him by a fabulous "somebody." At all events, that rumour was afloat; the country people were beginning to shake their heads over it, and to look on Mahomet as on something not quite human.

It was said that Mr. Singleton had had five wives. In India it was well known that he had had three, and there the whisper was, that they had all died "somehow;" and it was supposed that Mahomet knew a great deal more of Mr. Singleton's affairs than he appeared to do.

Mr. Singleton had started in life with the very unfortunate resolve of allowing nothing which he could remove to stand in the way of pleasure. Right or wrong, Mr. Singleton *would* have pleasure; innocent or guilty, he *must* have pleasure; and pleasure he *did* have, until nought on earth either did or could bring any more of it to his soul.

Whether he had conscience enough left to make night horrible to him, is hard to say. His health was feeble, and his nerves shaken; and that might have an effect on his rest, which effect people might suppose to be caused by a bad conscience.

Mr. Singleton's mind was a dreary waste; there was not one passion or affection thereof in a normal state, or properly governed and balanced. He was weak in body, unhappy in mind; there was nothing on which he could rest his heart to comfort it. Pleasure for him *had been*: it was gone—flown for ever. It had been the earthly, guilty pleasure which abideth not; leaving its victim, after a while, to re-appear as a witness against that wretched victim in another world.

Richard, under pretext of cricket, passed much of his time at Drayton Court. Ambrosia was forgotten: Almeria reigned supreme in his heart. The old thimble of the former had given place to a kid glove of the latter;

Richard's poetical compositions were in honour of Almeria : he had sworn to himself that *she* should be his wife.

The young lady was not slow to perceive the effect her beauty had taken on Singleton, and to her it was a great amusement to feed the flame of her young lover, unknown to anyone but himself.

For her sake Richard fagged at cricket and other manly sports, hoping thereby to recommend himself to her, and to cut out the Rev. Septimus Barnett ; a young clergyman whom Richard favoured with all his Eastern hatred. Little did Singleton wot that Miss Fotheringay bestowed on him the names of Blackboy, Othello, Tawny, and various others of the same kind ; any one of which would have been enough to have driven him wild with mortification and anger.

Although both Fotheringay and Brownlow laughed without mercy at Richard for his performances on the "German flute," he did not give it up. It was a means of bringing him into the beloved society of Almeria, who accompanied him on the piano to his great delight.

The "Dasher" would sometimes join in the concerts ; she being a flute-player as well as Singleton. Her performances were, however, more bold and manly than his. She held her flute in a perfectly horizontal line with her mouth ; her right elbow up ; her fingers ready for action. Off she would dash, making a most hideous face ; eyebrows elevated, forehead wrinkled, lip drawn down to a point like unto Pan's, who may perhaps have brought his mouth to the well-known form it wears from his diligent labour on the pipes.

Richard did not approve of her dashing, flute-playing ladyship ; but he put up with her, although she rasped his nerves, in order that he might see the more of Almeria.

Lady Fotheringay gave him hints on fingering and other mysteries of the art of flute-playing.

"Be bold, man!" she said to him; hold up your head and elbow with an air, bring out your notes full and round, and don't *peet* away like a blind beggar."

This speech brought a roar of laughter from young Fotheringay, who was present, as well as a faint spasmodic giggle from the Rev. Septimus. Richard's face became crimson, his eyes filled with tears, and his hands trembled. A smile from Almeria calmed him, although of the rest he said in his soul—

"You're nasty things, and I hate you!"

Singleton had left the academic abode of Dr. Savory, D.D., longing for the end of the holidays, that he might once more bask in the presence of Ambrosia. He now beheld them drawing to a close, and his feelings were not at all what he had imagined that they would have been. Oh, fickle human heart! he no longer cared to fly to Miss Savory: he only grieved at leaving Almeria.

Richard's embarrassment in the presence of Mr. Singleton had not worn off during the holidays; neither had Mr. Singleton's coldness towards him disappeared. This posture of affairs between father and son was not likely to bring about any confidences from one to the other. Richard wished to ask Mr. Singleton to tell him of his mother. He had often worked himself up to rush into his father's presence with questions on his lips; and then, even with his hand on the handle of the door, his heart would beat thick, his courage would fail him, and he would depart sighing and unsatisfied. He had one day asked Mahomet if *he* had known his mother.

"*Ra-aly*, sare, you should not a-ask me. *A-ask* my *ma-aster*; that would be *prarper*."

This speech of Mahomet's led Richard to imagine that

there was some mystery concerning her; which idea made him long and dread more than ever to ask Mr. Singleton about her.

After much battling in his spirit on this subject, Richard made up his mind that when he should take leave of his father on returning to Norly, he would boldly ask the question he so much wished to hear answered.

A day or two before his departure, young Singleton, musing on many matters, was watching the workmen at the haunted wing—wing, however, no longer, seeing that the foundations alone remained. He was drawn from his reverie by a labourer calling out that his spade, as he cleared away the rubbish, had struck against something hard. Richard jumped into what had been a cellar, and which had been bricked up; and there he stooped down, with the labourers about him, to examine the spot on which the man had hit with his spade.

After scratching away a little earth and rubbish, they beheld the corner of an iron-bound box.

“Dig on!” cried Richard, “and get it out.”

In obedience to this order, the men set to work, when they brought to light a large and worm-eaten oaken chest, strongly bound about with iron, and studded with nails of the same.

Young Singleton bade them not open it until his father should be present: he going in quest of him.

When Richard stood before Mr. Singleton, he found his old “Bogie,” Mr. Blenkins, beside him, and feeling the rich man’s pulse, watch in hand, and mouth pursed up. Mr. Singleton’s health was beginning to be very troublesome to him; wherefore, as he always did things in a grand style, he paid Mr. Blenkins a yearly sum in order that the doctor should visit him daily, and by his skill remove any uncomfortable sensation whereby he might be assailed.

Mr. Blenkins had honestly recommended air, exercise, temperance, and early hours. Mr. Singleton had vowed that such a regimen would kill him; and that all he required Mr. Blenkins to do was, "to keep his head above water, and make him comfortable;" hinting that if the doctor refused to do so, there were others to be found who would fall into his view. This being the case, Mr. Blenkins gave in, and proceeded to patch up Mr. Singleton, and to calm his nerves.

"Well?" cried Mr. Singleton, as his son appeared.

"Oh, nothing!" replied Richard, about to effect a retreat from the cold presence of his father, and of his father's doctor.

"Come in!"

These two little words stopped Richard's retreat, and brought him into the room.

Mr. Blenkins slowly returned his watch to the "fob," unpursed his mouth, scratched his nose, and said—

"You'd better go on with the ether, sir, and the lavender drops on sugar."

Richard stood by until his father asked the cause of his sudden appearance. Having told what had taken place, he awaited Mr. Singleton's orders.

When Richard had mentioned the wing, his father's face had become clouded and pale, causing him to look (so thought Richard) wonderfully like the portrait of the first Singleton—a portrait which had been burnt one night by the hands of Mahomet: so, at least, Mr. Goldup whispered. Mr. Goldup must have been well informed on that point, seeing that, having heard something during one of his listening-at-the-door expeditions, he had looked through the keyhole of the haunted room, where he had seen Mahomet feed the flames with the fine full-length family picture. Mr. Goldup had noticed that the visage of the

painted figure had, as he told himself, "*featured*" Mr. Singleton, as the flames surrounded it flickering and roaring, whilst the face seemed convulsed and full of horror, as it looked out pale and frowning from the fire.

Mr. Singleton sallied languidly forth leaning on Mahomet, and accompanied by Mr. Blenkins, the curiosity of whose nature led him to join the party without invitation. Richard followed in a state of great excitement, anxious to see what the oaken chest might, on being opened, give to view.

On arriving at the ruins, Mr. Singleton walked down the broken uneven steps that led to the cellar, and gave the order for opening the chest.

"Gently! gently!" cried Mr. Blenkins, on seeing how roughly the men went to work, "if you're not careful, zounds! you may destroy whatever's inside of it."

At this instant Mr. Goldup's wrinkled face appeared from behind a heap of rubbish, as he intently eyed the strong box. It was not long before the lid was forced open and raised. The ruddy beams of the afternoon sun shone upon a quantity of fine linen sheets, yellow with age, and which the workmen were about to drag roughly out.

"Steady there!" cried Mr. Blenkins, stopping them; and then turning to Mr. Singleton he added—"If you'll allow *me*, sir, I'll take 'em out."

The doctor, aided by Mr. Goldup, who had taken his monkey skip up to the chest, proceeded carefully and very slowly to draw forth the fine sheets, which, being rotten through damp and age, were rent even in Mr. Blenkins' careful hands.

The linen having been removed, a rich green velvet coverlet appeared. It had been thrown into the chest unfolded, and as though carelessly, or in great haste. Mr. Blenkins, taking a corner of it between his finger and

thumb, much as he would have handled a plaister, bespoke him thus :—

“ Now, Mr. Goldup, sir, we must mind what we’re about. We’re coming on it, whatever it is. I’ve heard say, sir,” he continued, looking up at Mr. Singleton, “ that they used to hide their treasures under ground in bad times ; and this may be something of the sort.”

“ Perhaps ! ” was Mr. Singleton’s calm reply, whilst his face was overcast ; and Richard was frantic with impatience.

The thick green velvet, discoloured by damp, was taken from the chest, giving to view a strong coarse piece of sacking, filling the length and breadth of the chest.

There was a dead silence as this was gently raised ; and many an exclamation when beneath it was seen a human skeleton. The body was bent on the thighs, and the legs bent on these ; whilst a rope was lying about it, with which the body had been bound in that position.

Mr. Singleton was seized with a nervous tremor on beholding the object before him. His dry lips gave vent to the words—“ Only a few bones ! Bury them again ! ”

“ Stay a bit, sir, let me have a look. There’s been another body beside. See here ! ”

So saying, the doctor pointed to a few blackened bones which lay above the skull of the skeleton. He took up one or two, examined them, and holding them towards Mr. Singleton, he said—

“ There’s been foul play here, sir. Just you look ! These bones are the bones of a new-born baby ; here’s its skull. Both skull and bones are charred. The child must have been burnt ! ”

“ There, throw them in again ! I hate those things ! ” Mr. Singleton replied, turning to depart ; his face looking white as death.

"The skeleton is that of a woman, sir! Gad, it's very strange! I wonder how *she* came by her death!"

"Gracious! gentlemen, look here! Its *uman air*!" Mr. Goldup, with these words, drew from the chest a quantity of very long dark hair. Mr. Singleton scowled on beholding it, and taking Mahomet's arm left the place, saying something in a tongue unknown to the bystanders.

"We'd better bury 'em again, sir, hadn't we?" inquired Mr. Blenkins of Richard, who had stood silently by flushed with excitement.

Before he could answer, Mr. Goldup, who had been raking among the dark dust at the bottom of the chest, held up to view a heavy gold seal ring.

Richard seized it, examined the engraving, and found it to be the Singleton crest.

"That ring," said Mr. Blenkins, screwing up his eyes, as he held the ring at some distance from them, "could never have been worn by a woman; it's far too large. It must have been dropped into the box when she was put in it."

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Richard," cried Mr. Goldup, with a bow: "but don't you think, sir, it's the very moral of the one in the old *pictur* with the peaked beard and *cu'rous* boots?"

Richard thought so too. His hand shook as he took the ring from Mr. Blenkins, and put it into his waistcoat pocket.

After examining the dust carefully, Mr. Blenkins declared that there were no further relics; wherefore Richard gave orders to close the chest, resisting Mr. Blenkins' request that he might be allowed to carry off the velvet coverlet.

A deep hole was dug in a neighbouring meadow, to which the old oak chest with its mysterious contents were



conveyed, and there buried. Richard stood by with Mr. Goldup to see it properly done; after which he returned to the Hall, which was redolent of ether, a large dose of it having been taken by Mr. Singleton to soothe his agitated nerves.

The workmen went home, talking as they did so in deep growling voices of the large box and the skeleton. They gave it as their opinion that it was no wonder the house had been haunted; and deemed it likely that it would be so still, unless Mr. Singleton got "our parson to lay the ghosts, like, in the Red Sea, and had the bones buried in holy ground."

Old Jenny, on hearing what had taken place, would have been ready to take an oath that the chest contained the remains of the babe and its mother, who, she said, haunted the fatal wing. When she was informed of the ring, so like the one in the picture, she threw up her hands as she said—

"Lor' ever a daisy! you may depend upon it 'twas he as put 'em in, and dropped his ring a doing of it. Poor dear lady, we shall none of us know what *she* went through! Never shall I forget to my dying day the shrieks I heard: and they *do* say Squire Singleton heard and saw as much as I did, the first night he come to the Hall, and slept in that very wing: and that's why it was pulled down, bless 'ee!"

Old Jenny was comfortably settled in a dry, weather-tight cot. It was Lawyer Small who saw to this. He was a kind-hearted man towards the poor, paying special attention to having all the cottages on the Singleton estates in proper repair.

"I've no notion," he would say, "of rich people building pig-styes for poor people to live in, and pay rent for: not fair. Landlords precious stingy about repairs; look on

tenants as paying machines, not men—bad, sir, deuced bad! Health suffers, poor things! pinched by cold; holes in premises; no proper drains; killed by stench; landlords not like it themselves: ‘do unto others,’ &c. Knock off a useless servant or two, lazy louts; give a few less grand dinners; apply cash to make dwellings air-tight and water-tight; not be so selfish; look on poor people as human beings—flesh and blood—things that can feel and suffer, damme! and pretty much, too—patiently, too! Hang it, sir, it makes my blood boil!—rich devils living on the fat of the land; wallowing in comforts; give away a few blankets and jenny-coats at Christmas; think themselves deuced generous and praiseworthy; why they should always keep a stock on hand to give to the poor creatures when they need it—money well laid out; pay a doctor so much a year to visit ‘em—money well laid out; cut out winter work for them—money well laid out; better than over-eating themselves, and getting gout and carbuncles. D— it, sir! where do they expect to go to? Rich man—poor man—Lazarus, sir! Dives, sir!—fine lesson, lost on most men; life’s short, very so.—What’s ninety years?—short lease at best—another world!—Talk of lawyers, rich men beat ‘em, by jingo! Bless me, I feel bursting—that I do, sir—damme!’

The last day of Richard’s holidays had arrived. He had bid adieu to the Adams’, at whose “college” his visits had been somewhat rare since a passion for Almeria had blazed up in his breast. Rose still looked upon him with girlish fondness; whether that fondness was ever to take a more serious turn remains to be seen. Richard had begun to find her admiration a very childish affair, and to pant for the attention and adulation of more weighty persons than little Rose Adams, a girl of fourteen. Janet, sturdy and trusty, had taken the fag of teaching off her mother’s shoulders;

delighting to see Mrs. Adams strolling in the little garden, training a shoot of woodbine here, picking off a dead rose there, or tying up a posy for the drawing-room, instead of listening to tedious tasks. Rose helped her sister, equally delighted with herself to behold their mother free from toil and care; deeming, however, that, after all, they were making but a small return for all that she had undertaken and done for *them*.

Janet's feelings towards Richard were taking a serious turn. She felt an interest in him for which she could but ill account. She saw all his "foibles," as she kindly called his faults; and yet she loved him, and excused him to herself and others. She ardently longed gently to correct his errors; to aid him in bringing his good qualities to perfection; to soothe the turbulence of his morbid spirit; and to plant happiness where misery threatened to grow and flourish. Richard and Richard's welfare were ever in Janet's thoughts. Did he think of her? No, not as yet!

Richard, on taking leave of the Fotheringays, had not beheld Almeria, although he had sat so long, in the hope of seeing her appear, that the "Dasher," after fidgeting and gaping, at length said to him—

"My dear Singleton, you must excuse me if I leave you, 'pon honour you must: the phaeton has been round this half hour, and I don't like to keep my cattle waiting. Don't let me turn you out though, as you seem to have your sitting breeches on: I'll send Mr. Barnett to amuse you. Bye, bye! Call on us when you come to town—always glad to see you, you know!"

Giving Richard her accustomed two fingers, she took up her straw hat and left the room; whilst he blushing and trembling, and dreading the promised presence of Mr. Barnett, likewise took his departure.

Fortune, or Cupid, or Venus, or somebody was kind to

him; giving his beloved to his view, as he left the dusty lanes to cross a grassy field. Almeria was sauntering with Tommy, and Tommy's little dog. On beholding her, Richard's heart beat quickly: he wishing that Tommy, scarlet jacket, nankeen trousers, purple sash and all, had been safe under the care of the Rev. Septimus Barnett.

Richard, of course, looked very foolish on meeting his idol. He did not exactly know what to say; he went so far, however, as to declare that it was a beautiful day; then, to relieve his embarrassment, he pinched Tommy's cheek, and stooping down, pulled the little dog's ear. The little dog, being a dignified dog in his way, did not like liberties to be taken with him; especially when they hurt, as did Richard's nervous, agitated pull of the ear. The "canine favourite," therefore, with a growl, snapped at him; causing the bewildered lover to start, and to back on Tommy's toes, who began to cry; whilst Almeria told Richard that he was very awkward; adding that "mamma and Mr. Barnett" would expire when she should recount the scene to them. Richard blushed, stammered, and begged pardon; whilst Almeria continued to laugh, Tommy to cry, and Syntax to bark; all to his great agony and confusion. It is unfortunate for a lover when the vehemence of his feelings places him in a ridiculous position before the very eyes he wishes to charm. Richard felt this, and knew not what to do.

He had concocted a farewell speech, which, beneath masking words, was to have given Almeria an idea of his sentiments. Of this, he could not, in his agitation, remember one syllable.

The best course for him to have taken would have been to have laughed with Almeria, to have consoled Tommy, and to have disregarded Syntax; but when did a nervous young

lover of sixteen, in a ridiculous situation, ever take the proper way out of it ?

Richard called pettishly to Tommy to be quiet, and hit Syntax sharply with his stick, sending him howling away. Tommy sped after his dear little dog ; thus leaving angry, mortified Richard alone with Almeria.

"I am glad you are so easily amused," he said, bitterly ; his eyes filling with tears as they were wont to do when he was angry.

"Who *could* help being amused ? I wonder you are not amused too."

"Do you ?" replied Richard, fiercely crushing a poor beetle who was journeying along the path.

"Dear me, Mr. Singleton, you are not angry, are you ?"

As Almeria said these words in her softest voice, looking on Richard with kind eyes and a gentle smile, he began to feel very like a fool and a brute. Both of these he passionately declared himself to be, as he seized her hand, vehemently begging her pardon.

Seeing Tommy hieing towards them with Syntax under his arm, Richard wrung Almeria's hand with tremulous fervour, and bade her farewell ; saying in a very indistinct manner—

"Think of me sometimes ! Will you ?"

In reply, Almeria withdrew her hand, smiled, and passed on ; leaving Richard rooted to the spot where she had left him. After taking a few paces, she turned her head, and fixing her laughing eyes on Richard she said,

"I shall never forget your little combat with Syntax, Mr. Singleton ! Adieu !"

So saying, she "waved her lily hand ;" of which gracious act Richard took no notice. He rushed off, repeating to himself over and over again, as he went, "Oh ! I've made an ass of myself, and she'll tell it all to that fool of a tutor.

He'll laugh at me, and so will Lady Fotheringay. They're nasty things, and I hate them ! ”

Then came the thought that perhaps Almeria might laugh at him too—a thought which made him wince and shudder. He next plunged into a vast and puzzling labyrinth, trying to prove to himself whether or no she cared about him. He could come to no conclusion on the subject, and had no one to consult in this harassing matter—a matter on which he had often dwelt with distracting doubts.

Singleton having determined to question his father concerning his mother, felt as though he were about to spring a mine as the time arrived for speaking.

Mr. Singleton had had a small gambling party, and Richard had remained up, contrary to his wont, until all the company had departed. It wanted a couple of hours to day-break when the last carriage drove off. Mr. Singleton was sitting at a card-table, dreamily making a pattern on the green cloth with the mother-of-pearl counters and some fifty or sixty bright guineas, leaning his head on his hand and biting his under lip as he slowly moved his playthings about. Mahomet was at the farther end of the room, getting out the chessboard and men, his master intending to play chess until daylight should appear, and the rising sun light him to his bed.

Richard drew near to his father, respectfully took leave of him, and then with faltering tongue said—

“ My mother, sir ! is she living ? ”

“ Eh ? ” inquired Mr. Singleton, continuing to make his gold and pearl pattern ; and not having heard what his son had said. Richard repeated his question ; whereupon Mr. Singleton clenched his hand, struck the table, and, raising his head, viewed Richard with lurid eyes as he said—

“ Never ask that question again, sir. She is dead ! Now go ! ”

Richard was warmly welcomed to Boscobelle by Dr. Savory and his sister ; but to him Boscobelle was not what Boscobelle had been. A change had come o'er the spirit of young Singleton's dream. At the academy he no longer found his loved Ambrosia : he merely beheld Miss Savory, a middle-aged, plump lady, good-looking for her years, fiercely rouged ; but not the being to whom he had secretly made that insipid offering, "*les prémices d'un jeune cœur.*"

Miss Savory, as did the Doctor, much wondered at the change they perceived in their parlour-boarder. Miss Savory declared that she could not "make him out ;" instead of the "obliging, sociable youth" he had been, she found him silent, moody, irritable, and fit for nothing but "poring over a book."

Study was now Singleton's delight, and a great rest to him after the course of manly diversions he had forced himself into at Drayton Court. He no longer gallanted Miss Savory to tea-parties as of yore ; neither was his "German flute" heard from among the bushes at gipsy-parties. The world of Norly said that his father's wealth and "grand company" had spoiled him ; furthermore observing, that it was quite ridiculous to see "such a lad so *high* and *stuck up.*" The Doctor remonstrated with his pupil, saying—

"My dear Singleton, you are becoming quite the moody misanthrope ; indeed you are. Youth is the season of pleasure. I must see you more genial, more expansive ; indeed I must, dear youth. The bow should not always be strung ; study and *recreation* should be pleasingly mingled, with a preponderance in favour of the *former*. Your mental powers are extensive ; you are an honour to these learned *groves*. Still, man is by nature a social animal, not made to muse and pine alone. Such conduct is the first *rround* in the ladder of mania. If you have a sorrow, confide it to

my *breast*. Speak, my dear Singleton; it is deeply distressing both to Miss Savor-ry and myself to see you thus."

The Doctor here hung his thumbs in his arm-holes, balanced himself on his toes and heels, and, hanging his head on one side, looked on Singleton with an air of paternal, *magister*-like, and compassionate encouragement.

Richard, during the Doctor's speech, had been irreverently leaning back in his chair, biting the end of a pen. His large dark eyes burnt with an unholy fire; his foot beat that tune commonly known as the "devil's tattoo."

"There's nothing the matter with me, sir," he replied: "all I want is to be left at peace with my books."

The Doctor, after another fruitless trial, found that he could do nothing with Richard, who, the more Dr. Savory attempted to get at him, retreated deeper and deeper into his shell. The Doctor, pronouncing him to be "a *great* mental anomaly," left him to his fate; whilst Mr. Plimpton Sawtre gave it as his opinion, that the boy had been too much spoiled, and not caned half enough in early youth: a cane being a fine counter-irritant, and bringing the bad humours out of a lad whether he would or not."

Miss Savory and Mrs. Plimpton Sawtre, womanlike, returned a verdict of deep, hopeless, incurable love!

Richard, looking down on everything and everybody around him, led a hermit-like life; his room being his cell, which he never left but to take his repasts, to study with the Doctor, or for a little exercise. He varied his existence by taking lessons in riding and dancing, that he might one day ride and dance with Almeria.

Richard was happy in his solitude; there being no one present either to wound his vanity or to raise his envy. His soul was in comparative peace, save when the idea that he should not behold Almeria for a year, and that in the



meantime she might marry, he being totally unable to prevent her, made him hot and cold, shaking as in a fever.

To wed Almeria had become the dream of his life. To retire from the world with her far from "the nasty things" he hated, seemed to him to be the supremest felicity to be enjoyed on earth. What Almeria might have thought of his plan he never inquired of himself, looking as he did, and as selfish people will do, only on his own side of the question.

Singleton still indulged in that unhealthy pastime of his childhood, the making of day-dreams and castles in the air. It is true that he no longer made himself an Eastern prince rambling through Arabian night adventures; still, all he mused about was just as pleasingly and deludingly vain and impossible: all centring in his own deification and delight.

Richard passed the winter at Norly, knowing that his father fled from the country cold and bleakness to the warmth and comfort of London and of Limmer's; and that the Fotheringays at that season quartered themselves in their large dark house in Hill Street. He therefore remained at the Doctor's, studying and dreaming beside the fire, never stirring out, all to the peril of his health both of mind and body.

From time to time Richard received letters from Brownlow; letters which made him wrathful through envy, because Brownlow was a free "man" at college, and he was but a parlour-boarder at Boscobelle Academy.

Mr. Singleton had languidly informed Richard that he was not to proceed to Oxford until he should have reached the age of seventeen.

Young Singleton had resolved that he would make Oxford ring with his name. He condescended to smile whenever Dr. Savory benevolently extended his hand over his pupil's head, declaring that in spite of some "little untoward

eccentricities," he expected to see him "atchieve *grreatness*," and that "Alma Materr" would one day have reason to be proud of "the youthful *warrior* in learning's bloodless field."



## CHAPTER VII.

## BEGINNING LIFE.

WHEN the time of young Singleton's departure for the University arrived, the Doctor with radiant visage, well-powdered peruke, and a large supply of lozenges, proceeded thither with his pupil; who, being well furnished with cash, insisted on making the journey in a post-chaise and four.

Dr. Savory, beaming with smiles, and complacently sucking his lozenge, gave himself up to the pleasure of bowling along behind four posters on a well-conditioned turnpike-road.

The Doctor undertook all the trouble of the journey. He ordered breakfast on the road: tea, coffee, hot buttered rolls, fried eggs and bacon, fresh butter and new bread, of all of which he largely partook. Then at two o'clock there was dinner. A steak, cold round of beef, pickles, strong ale, pastry, cheese, biscuits, and a bottle of port; under the influence of which last, the Doctor, on again taking to the road, confided to Richard the history of the courtship and matrimony of himself and the late Mrs. Savory. After relating this history, he replaced his wig by his handkerchief, and leaning back in his corner with a complacent chuckle, was soon sleeping a most delightful after-dinner slumber.

It was dusk when Dr. Savory and Richard drove up to

the best hotel in Oxford. In due time they found themselves comfortably seated at supper, to the Doctor's infinite satisfaction, who ate as though he had not on that day assisted at a certain large dinner and breakfast on the road.

The worthy divine, after having supped slowly and with infinite enjoyment, conversing blandly with the waiter, and inquiring concerning all the big-wigs in Oxford, at length threw himself back in his chair, slung his thumbs after his usual manner, and in a benevolent tone of voice ordered a small bowl of punch.

Pending the brewing and appearance of the smoking bowl, Dr. Savory, allowing his chin to repose on his breast, fell into a slight sleep; whilst Singleton, excited and restless, tried to calm himself down into reading the Oxford Guide, of which a thumbed and tattered copy, despoiled of many a print, and decked with various pen and ink scrawls and drawings, did duty in the sitting-room for the amusement of guests.

Presently a loud, deep-toned, sonorous bell put the air in motion, and half aroused the doctor.

"Ah! ah!" quoth he, smilingly, "my old friend Great Tom. Many a time, my dear Singleton—aye, many a time in youth's flowery pee-riod, have I—heard—and—obeyed—my—dear—Sin—gle—" and Dr. Savory was again reclining in the soft arms of Morpheus, that best of all the gods.

Richard listened with delight to the sound of the grand old monkish bell, so unlike the bells of these days of "progress." If he had known its history, he might have dreamt of Oseney Abbey, when the great bell there rung out: heard by the learned, pious monks; heard by those to whom they were as good angels; heard by those whom it called to devout prayers; heard by men long dead and gone—men of the olden time, religious and reverential. And now the old bell, that was cast with such care and

science, rings to tell young gentlemen that the gate-closing hour is arrived, and those cigar and pipe smoking young bipeds hear the sound thereof; but "Great Tom" now raises no feeling either of devotion or of reverence in his hearers. With the greater number of them that solemn sound is, in after years, associated with ideas of revelry, jollity, and fast ways—of noisy nights and seedy days—of great expenses and long bills.

The fine old colleges, too, look down on "*loudly*" clad boys, enjoying their first burst into freedom from schools and parents. The fine old colleges are nests wherein they revel. The fine old colleges cast their gray shade on many and many an aspirant to the future cure of souls—who, boating, smoking, drinking and tandem-driving, is supposed to be fitting himself to guide the spirits of men to heaven, rollicking the while among laymen, and "*cramming*," in due time, to pass examinations as best he may. Singleton was sorry when the bell was silent. The waiter appeared with the old china punch-bowl, saying, as he placed it on the table—

"Hear great Tom, gen'l'men? Visitors always listens to Tom; calls the young men home a-nights. Anything more wanted, sir?"

The waiter having disappeared, Doctor Savory rubbed his hands: then patting them loudly together, and uttering a well-pleased "*Ah!*" he drew in towards the table, inviting Singleton to do the same. The warm punch, adding its influence to that of various other potions, made the Doctor blandly and benevolently jocose, leading him to recount all the college pranks and frolics of his youth, whilst he laughed and chuckled as he told them, talking of "*Jack Bolton*," young "*Tom Dawkins*," now old fellows like himself.

The potions of the day, greater than he had ever before

taken, affected Singleton as well as the Doctor, although in a far different way. Richard did not wax bland, benign, and jocose ; his eyes gleamed ; he felt more in love with Almeria than ever ; whilst he was filled with vast envy and hatred for the world in general, and for Brownlow in particular. By the time the happy Doctor was leaning back in a large chair, singing—

“ Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle !  
Goes the small bell at noon,  
To call the bearers home ;  
But the deuce a man  
Will leave his can,  
'Till he hears the mighty Tom ! ”

his pupil was frowning and fuming, feeling greatly inclined to do an injury to some one ; and thinking the Doctor the most ridiculous old fool he had ever met with.

When the tutor and his pupil retired to rest in their respective white dimity beds, Dr. Savory's eyes were looking very swimming ; he blessed Singleton fervently, predicting that he would one day be Vice-Chancellor of Oxford ; then uttering many a “ hallo ! ” he dived into bed with his wig on. Having again emerged, with a few more “ halloes ! ” fainter than the former, he put on his cotton nightcap, bound his scarlet ribbon around it, once more sought his soft comfortable bed, feebly muttered something about the top of the bed sloping and turning, and so subsided into a series of loud, deep snores.

As for Singleton, sleep alighted not on him. He tossed restlessly about, his pulses beating quick and loud ; whilst the Doctor's snoring drove him frantic. It was in vain that he drew the bed-clothes over his head, the Doctor's snores still smote his ears. It was in vain that he passionately kicked over a chair—the Doctor snored on peacefully and happily.

Singleton's visions of Almeria, and of the distinguished race he was to run, were broken through by Dr. Savory's riotous sleeping. There lay the stout Doctor, as still as a young baby, in his dimity bed ; whilst his wig, calm as himself, reposed on the looking-glass. The rushlight shed a soft twilight around, making one large and a quantity of little moons on the ceiling and walls of the bed-chamber.

Singleton, wild with nervous irritability, leaped from his dimity place of repose, looked at the Doctor as he lay, his head deeply indenting a large soft pillow ; the tassel of his night-cap wagging as he snored, and his bright riband coming out against the white around him.

Richard shook his fist and ground his teeth at his unconscious tutor : then feeling that he must put an end to the Doctor's life if he remained where he was, he dressed himself, lighted his candle, and repaired to the sitting-room, there to pace up and down till dawn.

On awaking, somewhat late, Dr. Savory had a confused idea of a pleasant journey, a good supper, the booming of Tom, a bowl of punch, and——a blank. By the time, however, that the barber had shaved him, had dressed his wig, and had poured into his ear all the news and gossip of Oxford and the neighbourhood, the Doctor felt not much the worse for his little excess of the night before. He appeared before Singleton with a beaming countenance and a waggish smile, saying with great meaning—

“ Well, my dear Singleton, how are *you* this morning ? Did *Morpheus* use you well, dear youth ? Were you visited by *rrorsy* dreams and visions *fairr* ? by sleeping glimpses of academic *honourrs*, gray colleges, and future greatness ? Pray, ring the bell, dear boy.”

“ Your confounded snoring kept me awake all night,” was Singleton's inward reflection as he rang the bell and

smiled a sickly smile ; for his head ached, and he felt hot, cold, and parched all in one.

"The boy looks like a sick monkey ; I hope I did not lead him too far last night," thought the Doctor as he planted himself at the window, pending the answering of the bell.

"Ring, sir ?" inquired the waiter, a being in striped jacket, drab shorts, and tight cotton stockings. Of the two last-named articles of toilette a rear view only was to be obtained, owing to a long white apron which in the morning ever decked "waiter" and his fellows.

"Waitor," said the Doctor slowly, and with some hesitation, "we should like *grreen* tea—ahem !—a little broil—of—fowl—or—mutton—well *pepporred*—done a good deal—*drry*—cayenne *peppor*. I think—in short—you know—a—a—devil ! I dare say your cook knows—you understand, waitor ?"

"Y' sir. Anything else, sir ? Fine ham in cut—York ham, sir ? Oxford sausages—brawn, sir. Oxford famous for brawn, sir—just as famous as Blenheim is for little span'els, sir."

"No ham. Sausages, brawn, *errumpets*, *grreen* tea, *erream*, and—and—you know, waitor—a devil."

So saying, the Doctor turned his face to the window, and jingled the money in his breeches pocket. Singleton leant his forehead against the marble chimney-piece, longing for tea, and loathing all that he had heard the Doctor order, save that.

Doctor Savory made the tea strong, and enforced on Singleton the necessity of eating devil ; a remedy which answered so well, that Richard after breakfast felt able to go out with his reverend friend on a sight-seeing and visiting expedition.

The Doctor was in high spirits ; all the better, as he told

himself, for his indulgence of the day before. He was grandly eloquent on the subject of architecture, founders, study, and honours; benevolently jocose as he pointed out to Singleton the scenes of youthful frolics, and warmly affectionate as he shook hands with old friends and allies—curious old beings, all bachelors, snug and cozy in their college rooms.

Then, too, he waxed feeling yet encouraging, with a dash of the prophetic; when Singleton, having gone through the necessary forms, was by the Doctor welcomed as a “freshman.”

“Sweet season of youth, *fruitful* in smiles and joy; smiles and joy enhanced by a passing April shower! Welcome, my dear Singleton, to university delights! Ay, welcome! *thrice* welcome! Yet, let not youth *forget* the needful, studious hours; *nor* give each minute to delight, unmindful of pure fame. You are so well *grounded*, dear youth, nay, more than that, so far advanced, that you know more on your first *entrance* to these classic shades, than others do when they quit their college walls. Go on and *prosper*! Fame, honours, and *bright* days are yours, my dear Singleton; indeed they are. I assure you they are: quite so!”

Dr. Savory and Richard were invited to sup with the Rev. Alfred Marryat, Fellow of —, and the Doctor’s own particular college-chum.

This portly and rubicund divine entertained the greatest horror for the duties of a parish priest: living after living he refused; classical researches, severe music, and good cheer being the main objects of his bachelor-life.

At the first sound of Tom’s sonorous voice, the Doctor and Singleton sallied forth to keep their appointment.

In the Rev. Alfred Marryat’s room were assembled about a dozen black coats. Great was the hum of voices around



the Fellow's dark mahogany table, when, the cloth being drawn, punch, bishop, port, &c., decked the board. Then hearts were open, and tongues untied. Good stories; old recollections; witty sayings; capping of verses; mingled with classic quotations, and now and then a song and chorus. Such were the diversions at which Singleton assisted; greatly marvelling at the strength of brain of the reverend gentlemen around him, until his own head was of no use to him. The candles seemed close to his eyes; voices he heard, but no words; he felt no bigger and no heavier than a feather, with a kind of sensation that all that was taking place about him had somewhere and somehow happened in his presence before. He was not conscious that the Doctor was pronouncing a panegyric on him; neither did he know that a little wizened Fellow at his right hand warned him against college dissipation, encouraging him to perseverance in academic labours; and, lauding the happy life of the Fellow of a college undisturbed by matrimonial tempests and cares, held it up as an object to tempt Singleton's ambition. At a late hour, just when the *debonaire* classic mirth was at the highest, Dr. Savory arose, and taking Richard in his arms, gently laid him on the sofa; saying benignly as he did so—

“Bless me, poor youth! see how pallid he is! The heat of the *apartment* has *overcome* him. *Drink* we to his health, happiness, and future career!”

With these words the Doctor reseated himself; the punch-bowl was re-filled; nor did the goodly company separate until there was only darkness enough left to shroud their exit from the festivities. Singleton was left on the Rev. Alfred Marryat's sofa till the bright morning sun shining through the old latticed window on his wan visage called him back to life and misery; for very miserable he

felt after unwonted excesses, and a couple of nights passed out of bed.

When Dr. Savory, fresh and benign, appeared at his friend's, he found his pupil unable to go abroad. The Doctor dined in hall, and otherwise cheerfully and serenely disported himself among his old allies; declaring that his visit to Alma Mater had made him ten years younger; neither did he take his departure, uttering "Vale!" as he shook his various entertainers' hands, until he had faithfully promised to visit them every year.

When Dr. Savory had waved his hand to Singleton from the coach window, and that Singleton had seen the last of the white wig topped by the shovel hat, he felt free and "a man." He drew a deep breath of satisfaction, and set off in search of Brownlow and Fotheringay.

Singleton found these two friends in Brownlow's rooms; where, stripped of coat, waistcoat, and cravat, they were having a "set-to" with the gloves, under the direction of one of the "fancy;" a tall, powerful man, with a soft, good-tempered expression of face, and a nose slightly twisted on one side by some unfortunate blow from a strong-armed adversary.

As Singleton entered, this man was addressing Fotheringay, saying—

"Keep your temper, Squire Fotheringay, whatever you does! Keep it, sir; you're a losing of it fast! It'll be all up with you, if you can't find it again. Try and look for't, sir—There! Squire Brownlow's as cool as a *cow-cumber*; sweet-tempered as a cherub; and he's a giving it to you right and left, as he al'ers does, all along of you're parting with your temper. You've science enough, sir, and pluck enough for anything; but 'twont be no good to you if you loses your temper; *that* it won't!"

Singleton, having expected to have found his friends at

their studies, was somewhat surprised on seeing their actual employment. It made his sensitive nerves thrill, to behold the gloves caressing the faces of the two dwellers at the seat of learning. Fotheringay was crimson, his eyes gleaming; whilst Brownlow, serene and good-tempered, added to his rage. At length Fotheringay, pivoting on his heel, threw off his gloves, saying—

“ Oh! d—— it altogether! I’ll pay you off next time, Master Brownlow—Hallo, Singleton! how are you, old boy?”

Singleton having responded, and having greeted Brownlow, the latter began a “set-to” with the professor. Fotheringay growled, and looked on, together with another “man” there present; who from time to time called out with fawning rapture—“ Beautiful! beautiful: Dear me, Brownlow, I wish I’d half your strength and pluck; that I do! It must be so nice to be such an active fellow as you are! Capital! beautiful! by Heaven!”

The “man” who spake thus was a little, narrow-shouldered, mean-looking creature; whose pale, small gray eyes were full of cold cunning: his thin mouth seemed to find it hard work to execute the smile imposed upon it by its owner, Mr. Matthew Lund. Lund was the son of a poor merchant-captain, father of five children; of whom Matthew was the third. From his infancy it had been impressed on him that he must do something for his livelihood; seeing that he could expect nothing from his father. Matthew was of a nature to act up to the precepts he received on that head. He had been sent to a public school, where he distinguished himself by his talents and industry; made friends with all the rich and powerful boys; neglected and persecuted the poorer ones; and finally appeared at college, the fortunate boy, who had got there through his own exertions. In consequence of this, Lund in his heart despised all those who got there in the ordinary

way; although he neglected not to find out those who might be worth cultivating among his fellow collegians.

Brownlow being an orphan, with a present fine allowance from his guardian, and a splendid fortune *in prospectu*, Lund failed not to pay due court to him. Brownlow, in the honesty of his soul, looked on him as a civil, obliging fellow—"poor devil!"—and petted him out of compassion; not stopping to think whether he was good or evil, or whether he liked or disliked Matthew Lund.

To Fotheringay, also, as a future baronet, Lund was obsequious and flattering: although not so much so as to Brownlow, by far the richer of the two.

Although Fotheringay allowed himself to be flattered and fawned on by Lund, and although he liked the said flattering and fawning, he was wont to say that Lund was "a little sneak;" was wont, moreover, to treat him roughly; to laugh at him; and to make use of him, in spite of Brownlow's remonstrances as to Lund's being "a very inoffensive, obliging fellow," and not worth all Fotheringay's violence and overbearing airs. His violence and overbearing airs were by Lund taken with great outward serenity and inward disgust; the whole for the prospect of future reward, and "getting on."

As Singleton watched Brownlow and the boxer, Lund watched him, speculating as to whether *he* would be worth cultivating; already making many acute observations on such parts of his character as were to be seen during the hour he remained in his company.

The lesson being over, the prize-fighter took his departure; not, however, until Brownlow had engaged him to "take Singleton in hand;" assuring Richard that to be a "—— man," and to have no knowledge of boxing, was an unheard of iniquity; "except," he added, "in the case of Lund, poor fellow!—The doctors won't let you, will

they Lund, on account of your chest? As you're to be a parson, perhaps it don't signify; only you lose a good deal of fun, and all that sort of thing. Look here, Singleton, I'm going to take you under my wing till you can run alone, my boy!"

"Thank you," replied Singleton, not feeling particularly grateful for Brownlow's offer.

"I'll tell you what," quoth Fotheringay, "you'd better begin by making him swap that fine new gown for an old, mellow one: a new gown *does* look so Johnny Rawish!"

"I've an old one at your service," said Lund to Singleton.

"And you'll take the new one in exchange with pleasure—eh, Lund? Come along, I want you; got something you must do for *me*."

Fotheringay took his departure, accompanied by Lund, who wished to find out all about Singleton, without seeming, however, to be intent on any such thing; appearing to be wholly wrapt up in Fotheringay's business.

Singleton remained with Brownlow, who, in the most good-natured way, told him all he was and all that he was not to do; winding up by saying—

"I can tell you it's capital fun here; and as I'm not going into any profession, I don't trouble my head much about learning; only just enough, you know, to save myself from plucking: that's all. I mean to enjoy myself; sow my wild oats between this and five-and-twenty; and then settle down into a good, worthy sort of country gentleman; marry some pretty girl or other; look after my property; bring my boys up to fear God and honour the King, and leave the girls to their mother. That's my plan, old boy, what's yours?"

"I've got none!" replied Singleton with a sigh, as he thought of Almeria.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## COLLEGE CAREER.

SINGLETON soon found out that, in the set he had fallen among, learning was not thought to be "most excellent;" neither was it esteemed as being "better than house and land;" on the contrary it was considered to be "very slow," and those who followed it to be "slow coaches." He found that his vast acquirements would gain him no credit among his fellows, whatever they might do with Dr. Savory and his friends the "big-wigs." He began to look with a kind of surly contempt on his own gifts; whilst he viewed with admiration and envy those of the young gentlemen he dwelt among.

Singleton's vanity would not allow him willingly to remain second to any one. Without looking on his small stature, delicate make, and fine nerves, he made up his mind that none in his college should outdo him in feats of strength, in driving, in drinking, or in any of the Oxford diversions then in vogue.

Brownlow, seeing the turn he had taken, as well as his eagerness, began to hope that he really should "make a man" of Singleton.

Into what misery will not vanity and envy lead a man! Young Singleton was led by vanity and envy to the casting away of fame and happiness, whilst he imposed upon himself a life of toil and disappointment; vainly hoping to shine and to dazzle in the forced practice of all that was contrary to his nature, and loathsome to his soul!

Poor Janet! She had heard of Richard's departure for college with joy and hope—a hope that *there* he would find fame—that *there* he would, among his fellow students,

soften his asperities, and allow good to triumph over his "childish weaknesses." Poor Janet! how little she dreamt of what his college career was to be.

It was not long before Lund became well acquainted with the depths and turnings of Singleton's heart; from the study of which he hoped to draw profit, both present and future; and which study he had not troubled himself to enter on, until he was well assured that it would be quite worth his while to pursue it.

So well did Mat Lund play his part, that Singleton soon gave himself up to the charms of friendship—or, more properly speaking, to the charms of being dexterously flattered, and reverentially looked up to, for the first time in his life. Singleton had never before met with so pleasant a companion; nor Lund with so ready a prey.

When Singleton's spirits flagged, as at times they would—when he began to think he should never be so strong as Brownlow, nor so dashing as Fotheringay—Lund would cheer him. He would suffer himself to be knocked about by the desponding youth, both with gloves and sticks; would assure him that although he was small he had an eastern strength and activity that would go much further than "the clumsy strength of bigger men." When Singleton's head ached, and his hand shook after a wine party, Lund would tell him that a little practice would soon harden him to drink with the best of them.

To compass this, Singleton set himself seriously to work, "practising drinking;" fully believing that he might, by degrees, bring himself to drink any quantity unscathed.

He, therefore, in company with Lund, would seriously, as a task, pass half the night in drinking.

A kettle of negus was kept on the hob, or a bowl of punch on the table, from which the silly youth drew lessons, with about as much satisfaction as a boy in these days feels,

as he viciates stomach, brain, and nerves, in the pursuit of cigar-smoking without sickness.

Lund was too prudent a being to drink very deeply ; but he would enchant Singleton by pretending to be more than half-seas-over long before Richard began to feel uncomfortable ; he vowed the while that Singleton's brain was so fine, that with a little more practice, he would soon put all the thick brains of "stronger fellows" under the table. All this was believed by Singleton—by Singleton, who might have fulfilled Dr. Savory's prophecy, and have made the University ring with his name, had not unchecked passions blinded and misled him. In spite of practice, Singleton never succeeded in out-drinking any of his companions. He was generally disabled himself before the fun and frolic of the evening was at its height.

Singleton's visage was the visage more often scored with burnt cork than any other in his college ; the black stripes being varied by lines in white chalk, which Fotheringay vowed suited the victim's complexion better than black.

Neither was Singleton much more successful in driving than in drinking. Four-in-hand was his ambition ; yet the height of the box was unpleasant to him, whilst the weight of the "ribands" caused his arm to tremble, and the pulling of the steeds threatened to pluck him from his throne. Still he persevered, declaring that to "tool a drag was the jolliest thing going." Lund would grin approval ; Brownlow call out, "That's your sort, sir !" whilst Fotheringay would wink maliciously behind his back, to the no small amusement of the bystanders.

To Singleton's mind, the most bitter part of the driving task was, that he never felt quite safe in his performances unless Brownlow sat on the box beside him ; whilst to Lund was given the august office of blowing "a yard of tin."

When Singleton suffered his team to get themselves into



a mess, Brownlow would put all straight, with his strength, skill, and judgment, as easily as a fairy might have done with her wand. He little wotted what were the feelings of hatred and envy that Singleton entertained towards him, as Brownlow, laughing, returned the reins and whip to that fragile Jehu, who would scowl, bite his lip, and roar out to Lund, "Don't make such a d—d row with that confounded horn!" whilst he might have added, as of yore—"You're nasty things, and I hate you!"

Singleton's vanity was triumphant when he heard "men" sing the praises of his drag and team. Well pleased, too, was he to look upon the well built coach, the "rattling bars," the high-mettled grays, with their tanned harness and the flowers in their head-gear. A "dashing fellow" he felt himself to be, in his many-caped driving coat, drab shorts, tops, and low-crowned hat. He paid dear for all this glory, by wear and tear of nerve, and weariness of soul.

Ah, Singleton! with thy subtle brain, and thy nervous body, so femininely fine, thou shouldst have left hardy sports to the hardy, giving thyself to toil of mind, which would have been none to thee.

Singleton, as many a young man has done—is doing—and will do—had taken the wrong turning, and was travelling rapidly along the wrong road. Happy are those who, having so done, turn again, and hurry back to the right path before it be too late! Some in Richard's college took him to be the dashing, reckless, three-bottle man he set up for. Others saw how the case stood; pitied, and called him "poor Singleton."

After a time Brownlow opened his eyes to the fact that drinking was death to his friend. He moreover thought it his duty to warn him against it, as friend should warn friend when danger is at hand.

"I'll tell you what, Singleton," he said; "drinking

won't do for you. I've kept my eye on you, and you're only a match for Lund. You'll kill yourself if you go on at the pace you do. You never let the kitchen fire out, as old Titterton, the scout, says ; why even *he* groans about you. 'Lor' love 'ee, sir!' he said to me, the other day, 'do 'ee speak to Muster Singl'ton, you as is hisn friend. Bless my wig, but he'll drink hisself to death in less nor no time. I've seed a many on 'em, but I never seed the likes o' he; and my private pinion is, he don't like it neither : takes it 'cos the company *doos*, and not out o' good fellyship. Now, you and Muster Foth'ringay's as pretty drinkers as I'd wish to see ; but Muster Singl'ton 'll never make head or tail of it as long as he lives : and that won't be very long *nether*, if he *goos* on as he *doos*, sir ! ' "

"D—n Titterton ; he's an old ass ;" quoth Singleton, with trembling voice and humid downcast eyes. "He's no business to interfere with me ! "

"Oh ! poor old fellow, it was well meant on his part ; and I advise you to pull up a little. You've no moderation ; you jump into everything over head and ears. You'll wind up by a short life and a merry one ; and, by George ! that's the greatest mistake a man *ever* made : die before your beard's sprouted ; whilst all your dear friends settle their chins in their cravats, or hit their boots with their whip as they call out—'Poor devil ! I always expected it. D'ye bet on the favourite next Derby day ? ' "

Singleton cursed Brownlow in his soul, as he uttered this speech ; but reply to it he could not. Rage, envy, crushed vanity, and mortification were all rioting in his breast—let loose there to wound and sting him.

There was the man, whom it was the present end of his life to outdo, giving him advice ; and counselling him to give up the very thing by which he was ruining his health in order to surpass Brownlow.

As he received no answer from Singleton, Brownlow left off flicking the air with a tandem whip—with which pastime he had solaced himself during his speech. Looking up at his friend he was amazed at the expression of his quivering face; the lurid fire of his bloodshot eyes; and the frown which drew his arched eyebrows together.

“Hallo!” cried Brownlow. “You’re not going to be angry are you, old boy, because I have acted a friendly part towards you? I won’t see you lose yourself for want of an open-hearted opinion, that I won’t; so frown away if you like, but your friend I am, and as your friend I’ll act. Take your bottle like a man, but don’t attempt three. Shake hands, there’s a good fellow, and think it all over when you’re alone. I shan’t say a syllable to any one else on the subject, ’pon honour!”

With these words, Brownlow took Singleton’s hot trembling hand in his honest and manly palm, gave it a kind, hearty grasp, and so left his miserable friend to his meditations.

What was the effect of Brownlow’s advice?

Like most advice, it had the effect of irritating the receiver against the giver.

Singleton, trembling with rage, opined that Brownlow was an officious prig; that he had no right to meddle with any of his doings; and that he ought to be called out for his impertinence. From a duel, however, the young man shrunk yet more than from boxing-gloves or single-stick: the idea of the black cold muzzle of a pistol pointed at *him*, and about to vomit fire and lead, had often filled him with a secret panic. To meet the reality he felt to be impossible.

To cut Brownlow, to send him to Coventry for ever, was his next thought. On that he dwelt with angry delight, until he recollected—oh, bitter mortification!—that without the kind good-natured being whom he envied and hated,

there would be an end to his glory. No more driving ; no more "town and gown ;" no more "me and Brownlow !"

He could not help seeing that half his success at " —— " came from his friendship with Brownlow ; *he* being, without any doubt, the gem and acknowledged first-rate "man" of that College. Besides this, Singleton felt that he could not show off on the coach-box without Brownlow to support him. Fotheringay was wont to put his horses into mad gallops ; and he had once gone so far as to overturn the drag, because Singleton had owned that he had never taken part in a runaway and upset. In Lund's coolness and skill Singleton put no more trust than in his own.

With the exception of these three, Singleton shrank from much intimacy with the College men. His nerves could not bear their roughness, and he felt an envious kind of contempt for them, although he was torturing and wearing himself out, in the endeavour to astonish and to outdo them.

Singleton knew full well that he could never plunge into the rough row of "town and gown" without his trusty ally, Brownlow. Give up that sport he could not. Had he not boasted of his prowess in the fight ? Had he not made light of black eyes and cut lips received in the cause, although they were to him as broken limbs to stronger and more hardy mortals ? Yes, all this he had said and done. If he gave up Brownlow, he must fall from all his glory.

After much angry rumination, young Singleton had just made up his mind that his only course was to brave Brownlow ; and to be, as he told himself, "worse than ever, playing the devil with a vengeance," when he was startled by a heavy knock at the door. On being opened, it gave to his view the square-built figure of the Rev. Dr. Savory.

The Doctor walked solemnly into the room, slowly placed his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, turned his lozenge as in other days, wagged his head, balanced himself

on his toes, looking on Singleton the while with an air of pitying severity.

Richard's first feeling on beholding his former master, was the old school feeling of awe. After the first few seconds, this gave place to the recollection that he was a three-bottle and a driving man; that it behoved him to keep up this character, and to astonish the head of Boscobelle Academy. Like most people who are acting out of character, Singleton overdid his part.

Having collected himself, he answered to the Doctor's melancholy, "My dear Singleton!" by a hard slap on the Doctor's broad back, together with a loud invitation to sit down.

Dr. Savory reddened, as his pupil followed up his first attack by perching himself sideways on the table, flicking the tandem-whip in imitation of Brownlow, and saying, in a voice as like a "jarvey's" as he could make it—

"Well, sir, what's the best news with you?"

The Doctor silently eyed young Singleton, a process so embarrassing to that miserable youth that he was obliged to cover his nervousness by touching up the clerical periwig as though it had been leader in a tandem.

Dr. Savory winced, crying out, as he shielded his head with his outspread hands—

"My dear Singleton, desist! I must insist on your desisting; I must indeed, dear youth!"

Richard, in a guttural tone, replied to this request, saying—

"Don't be afraid! I can cut a fly off a leader's ear, sir; that's your sort!"

To this speech he added the following verse of a driving song. He gave it out with a slang shake of the head, winding up by squaring his whip elbow, as though saluting some visionary being, and giving himself as much the air of

Joe Ed'ards, the pet dragsman of the "—— men," as he possibly could :—

"Come, lan'ord, and bring us a glass of good gin,  
To keep the cold out, and to warm us within ;  
And a fresh thong of whipcord all knotted so strong,  
To tool 'em to Oxford, all trotting along !  
Toll loll loddy.

\* \* \* \* \*

The remainder of the chorus was cut short by the deep voice of the Doctor.

"Cease, Singleton," he cried ; "cease playing the fool ! Arre *you*, sir, my fondly cherished disciple ? Arre *you* ; you in so unacademic a habit—bottle-*grreen* coat, pink waistcoat, drab breeches, top-boots, and *sprrigged* muslin neckcloth ; arre *you* the *prromising* youth on whom my fondest hopes were fixed ? Hope dies within me as I gaze on you. My reverend friends have had their eyes upon you ; *they* have somewhat *prprepared* me ; but, alas ! those bloated features, those bloodshot eyes, those *feverred*, parched lips, those trembling hands, tell a tale *farr* more *drreadful* in its *rrugged* truth than all my imagination had *picturred* of you ! "

Here the Doctor drew out a vast Indian silk pocket-handkerchief, glorious in red and yellow hues, wherewith he loudly blew his ponderous nose, to the scattering of powder from his peruke ; whilst poor Singleton began to feel very small, scarce knowing what to do or what to say.

By the time Dr. Savory's nasal volleys were at an end, and his handkerchief rolled up at the bottom of his sack-like pocket, Singleton had found out that Singleton could not help Singleton ; wherefore he again had recourse to Joe Ed'ards, disguising his slight self in an imitation of that six-foot, burly wearer of capes, and saying, in a growling voice—

"De gustibus non est disputandum ;  
Some like a gig, and some a tandem ! "

“Lost! lost! Ah, lost in mind and body! Whither! ah, whither is your *present* headlong course leading you? To destruction; I emphatically repeat it, to destruction. Golden opportunities cast aside, and for what? For what? For *drunkenness* and debauchery. Fame, health, and good name shamefully sacrificed; and for what? For the applause of fools—the *praises* of giddy youth. Ephemeral happiness is yours, if happiness it be. Have you no soul? Have you no conscience—no self-respect? Oh, shame upon you! I could weep, my dear Singleton, to see you thus; I could, indeed: I really could; I could upon my veracity! It is vanity, naught but vanity that has misled you. You have been thrown among mortals *grovelling* in sense, devoid of mind. Instead of nobly shaking off such friends—nay, let me not call them friends—such enemies; and, under the *fostering* care of the academic lights I introduced you to, seeking to gain a footing among wiser and more meritorious youth, you have *suffered* a morbid vanity to lead you to vie with your set in folly and in wickedness—ay, in wickedness.”

Dr. Savory here deepened his deep voice to his best pulpit bass; shaking one hand aloft, and striking the table with the other.

Singleton was beginning to feel very uncomfortable. In spite of Dr. Savory's bombast and affectation, the truth of what he said touched his hearer's soul; and, added to Brownlow's advice, was fast sinking his sensitive mind into despondency. He had meant to astonish the Doctor: his vanity was hurt by the failure of his aim, as well as by the reproof he was undergoing. He had not a word to say; his head was aching; he felt an unpleasant swelling of the throat; Joe Ed'ards even failed to help him. He had recourse to a silent staring at his—

“Fresh thong of whipcord, all knotted so strong;”

whilst the Doctor having cleared his throat, again burst forth:—

“I fondly hoped to have seen your room, my dear Singleton, furnished with ponderous tomes; receptacles of the thoughts of the mighty dead; o’er which to burn the midnight oil. I look around! What do I behold? The puffed-up boxing-glove decks the wall, bearing company to single-sticks, to foils, to whips, to the spoils of the chase; whilst prints and paintings unpleasing to the sober eye, are intermixed with them: all—all bearing witness to the life you lead; to the degradation and destruction that await you! I thought to have heard Alma Mater ring with your name. I find you to be the leader of dissipated youth—the companion of coachmen, prize-fighters, and horse-dealers.”

Singleton here interrupted the Doctor; saying, in a voice made trembling and husky through his feelings—

“That’s seeing life, sir!”

“Life! ’tis death, poor boy!”

Having so spoken, Dr. Savory paused; Singleton breathed hard; dropped his whip; coughed nervously; and felt inclined to throw himself weeping in despair on the Doctor’s ample breast.

Just then, however, Fotheringay burst into the room, followed by Lund.

“Smoke the big-wig, Lund!” whispered Fotheringay, winking at Mat.

Singleton heard the whisper; saw the wink; violently swallowed his tears; and called up Joe Edwards to the rescue.

That man is but a pitiful creature who, weakly casting himself aside, stalks abroad in the likeness of another. Singleton—clever, learned Singleton; full of genius and of natural refinement; born for the distinction which letters



give ; who might have stretched forth his hand and seized the poet's wreath—Singleton, misled by his overgrown, morbid passions, was now making it his glory to look, to speak, to act, as Joe Edwards—a drinking, swearing, cunning, coachman.

The Doctor bowed sedately to Fotheringay and Lund ; to which salutation the former replied by seizing the “ yard of tin ; ” on which he blew a loud blast, like unto that which was wont to announce the arrival of the mail.

“ Not quite the tune for a *slow coach*, eh ? ” quoth Fotheringay, with a wink towards the Doctor.

Singleton forced himself into an unnatural “ Haw, haw, haw ! ” at his friend's wit ; then beginning once more to feel like his model Joe Ed'ards, he thus bespoke Dr. Savory :—

“ I say, old gen'l'man, you'd better come to wine with me this evening. Joe Ed'ards is coming. We'll have a wet night of it : no heel taps ; bumpers round, and no wincing ! ”

Fotheringay put the finishing touch to this speech by the slow, solemn, coachee-like phrase :

“ *That's* your sort, sir.”

All this time Lund had been holding a parley from the window with the owner of a squeaking voice who was passing beneath it. Lund did not wish to compromise himself with his allies by not laughing at the Doctor, neither did he wish to laugh *at* him, as he could not quite make out who or what he was.

“ My dear Singleton,” said the Doctor, slowly rising, and taking up his shovel hat, “ it is with intense pain, and grief I see you thus ; indeed it is ! Fare you well, *pooorr* youth ! and may your better genius turn you in time from the abyss to which you headlong *rush* ! I had hoped to have seen you an ornament to your country, the *pride* of

her senate. Your country and her senate will call to you in vain. Farewell ! ”

Dr. Savory left the room, after bowing to Lund and Fotheringay ; this latter worthy returning the bow by squaring his elbow at the Doctor, and giving him a parting “ Too-ee ! too-ee ! too-ee ! ” on the horn.

When Fotheringay and Lund left him, Singleton’s spirits sank at a rapid rate ; Fotheringay’s parting speech not having tended to raise them, or even to keep them where they were.

“ Well, I’ll be with you to wine, my boy ! ” he had said ; adding as he stood in the doorway, driving an invisible four-in-hand with his stick : “ by the way, there’s old Titterton open-mouthed about *you*. The jolly old cob swears you’re drinking yourself to death, and that *we* ought to pull you up. I told him you were old enough and ugly enough to take care of yourself ; and that if you chose to go to grass with your teeth up’ards, it was your own look-out. Now, then, Lund, give ’em their heads, and let’s be off ! ”

How miserable young Singleton felt when, having secured his oaken out-works, he laid his arms on the table, his aching head on his arms, the hot tears bursting from his eyes.

These having subsided, he paced slowly up and down his room, chewing the cud of all the misery he had that day swallowed.

“ I hate it *all* ; I detest everything, I do ; I loathe all my coarse dissipation ; I execrate Fotheringay and Brownlow, and all the brutes I am mixed up with ; Lund’s the only good fellow among them. I am sick and shaken, and old Titterton’s right. However, it would never do to own it, or to give in, and look like a fool. No ! I must go the pace whilst I’m among them all. I wish to Heaven I had never come here : or that I’d got into another set. or some-

thing. Well! never mind, it can't be helped; and I'll astonish them to-night, if I die for it!"

Thus thought, with many sighs, that dashing fellow young Singleton. Being unable to bear any more reflection, he bathed his face in fresh water, and sallied forth for a lounge.

The melancholy collegian, on reaching the bottom of his staircase, threw himself into proper "jarvey" form. He plunged his burning hands into his coat-tail pockets; dragging those square-cut bottle-green skirts forward; at the same time taking care to walk like a "dragsman," as though very stiff about the hip joint from much sitting on the box. Neither did he forget to bring his legs to the front, with unbent knee, after having kicked them out to their respective sides, slowly and gravely, as a spectre might have done; his gait being much what a pair of compasses would have been, if inspired to walk.

The stiffness of his neck was faultless. As he looked about hither and thither by means of the ingenious device of turning his body from the hips and bringing his head round with it, one might have supposed him to be devoid of pivot whereon to turn that throbbing head.

Singleton found his gown rather in his way in the performance of the half swagger half roll he was executing. He involuntarily pulled his hands from his bottle-green tails, allowing them to disappear beneath the gown, as he saw Dr. Savory arm-in-arm with an old chum coming up the street.

His cheeks flushed and his eyes fell as the Doctor nodded to him in passing; whilst his heart beat and he bit his lips as he heard Dr. Savory's friend say, "A poor vain fool, sir, lost in every way!"

These words cut Singleton to the soul. He had not in his heart the least contempt for "big wigs;" none of the

looking down upon learning and superiors so necessary to be possessed by every "man" of spirit. He had never before arrived at their opinion of him; and to hear himself thus spoken of by one of the cleverest and most learned Dons in Oxford, was a stunning blow to his vanity.

"A poor vain fool, sir, lost in every way!"

Singleton repeated these fatal, galling words over and over again. There was no doubt but that they were meant for him; the reverend divine who spoke them having uttered them loudly, boldly, and with a meaning not to be mistaken. He hoped that young Singleton might hear them, and that laying them to heart, he might yet mend his ways.

Poor Singleton! he did not reflect that it is quite impossible to astonish every one. Universal conquest in that way is a phantom; for whilst a vain man is astonishing, or thinking that he astonishes, one portion of his fellow mortals, the very means he takes to do so bring him into contempt with the other portion.

Singleton as he paced quickly along forgot the coachman drill; forgot to stiffen knees and neck. He hurried from the town, burning and shivering; vexation and confusion in his mind; hatred and envy in his soul.

Tired out, he threw himself, as in boyish days, on the grass beside the river; staring at the fleecy afternoon clouds; listening to distant sounds; and longing with all his heart to fly from the world, and bury himself in solitude with Almeria Fotheringay. In the midst of all his coarse and boisterous dissipation, Singleton still loved her with ever growing ardour. She was the bright spot in his life; to possess her was the end of his existence.

Singleton could have lain for ever by the murmuring river, musing on Almeria, and forgetting his woes; with no forced character to be kept up, and no strain on his nerves.

It behoved him, however, after two hours of comparative happiness, to retrace his steps to the scene of all his glories and mortification; wherefore he arose from the earth, wearily and heavily, with aching legs and dizzy head regaining the road.

The idea of the coming wine-party was anything but agreeable to young Singleton. In his present frame of mind he would have given worlds that it should not take place; however, on reaching his rooms, he beheld preparations going on for his torture. In due time his guests began to arrive; whilst he brushed himself up to be as stupidly like a stage-coachman as possible.

When the company were all assembled, and the gigantic Joe had taken his place amongst his young admirers; when Singleton had made sure that all the items of the orgie were at hand, he locked the door, and, stepping to the window, flung the key from it.

"Now, my hearties!" cried Singleton, rubbing his hands, and planting his feet very far apart, "not a man of you bolts before morning. We'll have a jolly night of it, and no skulking. There's three bottles before each of you; finish them, and take as much more as you like. Sit down, and I'll give a toast and a sentiment to start you. Now then, bumpers round! What are you staring at, Brownlow? Fill your glass, old fellow, and fire away."

Brownlow had looked at Singleton, in order to bring to his remembrance the words he had that morning spoken to him. Seeing that his looks were vain, Brownlow filled up his glass; and Singleton called out—

"Now then! Here's success to drinking; and may the man who shirks his bottle lose his friends!"

The toast and sentiment were received with great applause. Every "man" had soon got through his first bottle; the hilarity was great.

“Here’s jolly Joe Ed’ards!” cried Fotheringay, glass in hand. “Long life to the old buck; and may he never want a box to sit on, nor a friend to sit beside him!”

When the uproar that followed these words had died away, Joe Edwards arose, looking benignantly on the youths about him.

This pet “jarvey” was, as before stated, about six feet high, and large in proportion. If the reader will, for an instant, picture to himself a feather-bed on two sugar-loaves, with a small Dutch cheese for a head, he will have a very good idea of Mr. Edwards’ figure.

His face was fiery red in summer, and purple in winter, the effects of hard weather and hard drinking. His little black eyes, with the blood-shot and yellow whites (if whites they could be called), were set in crimson rims; his large cracked lips were blue; his nose was like unto a Brobdignag strawberry; his black hair, cropped close, shone greasily, cleaving tight unto his head.

Having smoothed down this short hair with his fat brown hand, Joe bespoke the company as follows:—

“My sarvice to you, gen’l’men, and much obliged. I gives your sweet’arts and mine; and I looks too’ards you. Here’s all your good healths, as well as *theim*!”

The coachman, having tossed off his bumper amidst intense applause, was called upon for a song.

“What’s it to be?” inquired he, drumming on the table with his thick fingers. An opinion having gone forth that it did not signify, so that the ditty “smelt of the shop;” Joe Ed’ards replied:—

“Well, then, gen’l’men, since you’ve no *chice*, I may’s well drive on, and hopes you’ll *jine* in chorus with all your ‘arts.”

Clearing his very husky voice, he proceeded to sing a coaching song in most dolorous guise, drawing out some

notes and quavering on others, his hearers never failing to roar out the chorus with heart and soul.

Song followed song, glass followed glass, and bottle followed bottle, until brains swam and turned, and voices became thick and paralytic.

The faces of the youths there present were all more or less bloated and red, save Lund's; but then he did not indulge to the extent his companions did.

Unlimited port had set its seal on most of them; and their thickened features and hot palms bore witness to the fact.

The cigar smoking of this age marks its victims far differently. *They* are pale, or sallow; lean visaged, with sickly-looking hair and beard; enervated and lazy. The subtle, intoxicating smoke may stop their growth; destroy digestion; may disease their hearts; may disorganize their brains and nerves. It may do all this, and more; but then smoking is not drinking: its outward effects are not so visibly degrading as those of drinking, whatever its inward effects may be; and so, in mote-and-beam guise, this generation complacently smoketh. It looks down on the past generation as "a set of brutes;" whilst the next may, perhaps, look down upon this as deluded creatures, puffing away health and strength in tobacco-smoke.

Prudent Lund, in due time, crept off, to the cry of "Stole away!" from some of the party, who, without quitting their chairs, waved helpless, heavy arms towards him, as though vainly trying to clutch some flying vision.

Lund retreated to Singleton's bed-room, where, throwing himself on the bed, he soon fell asleep, in spite of the din and riot in the next room. The party therein indulged largely in singing. One little, fat, red-faced youth continuing to repeat, that if *he* sung it would be an insult to the company: and yet persevering in chaunting "Oh, Nanny wilt thou gang wi' me?" alternating the ditty by the oft

repeated words :—" 'Pon my soul ! if *I* sing 'twill be an insult to the company ; 'pon honour it will ! "

Mr. Edwards, whose head was but slightly affected by his potations, enlivened his audience by pleasant anecdotes, interspersed with songs.

By degrees one or two of the company dropped asleep—Singleton being among them. Fotheringay, of course, seized the opportunity of blacking and whitening his face, until he looked like a painted savage.

" Poor young gen'l'man ; he's not up to his work, and never will be, bless you ! Them foreign-bred ones never is," cried Joe, pointing towards his sleeping entertainer with a very long and slightly curved clay pipe.

Singleton's sleep was not long. On awaking he looked fiercely about him ; being ever ferocious and quarrelsome when drunk. His large fiery black eyes rolled savagely, and, being surrounded by a broad band of burnt cork, looked like those of some murderous Indian about to tomahawk a foe.

The coachman quietly eyed Young Singleton as he glared on his guests ; then observing that Richard's derangement of brain was far greater than that which is caused by drinking, he took his pipe from his mouth, saying—

" He's more than drunk, young gen'l'men ; he's crazy. Hold him tight till I comes back."

The coachman went into the bed-room, from whence he returned with a large pitcher ; the cold contents of which he suddenly dashed over Singleton's head.

The patient gasped and swore ; the coachman took him in his arms as though he had been an infant, decked him with a turban of wet towels, loosened his clothes, and laid him on the bed beside Lund, who awoke not.

" There'll be nothing for Squire Singl'ton but balls, bleedings, and mashes for some time to come, or my name's



not Joe Ed'ards. He's in a 'igh fever, if ever a man was. Now, gen'l'men, let me *reecom*mend you to go and keep quiet in t'other box, and I'll stay in this 'un, in the arm *cheer*, till old Titterton lets us out in the morning. Don't want much more nor a *nour* of the time."

Thus ended the wine party at which Singleton had intended to "astonish" his guests.

Titterton having opened the door, let all the hot thirsty "men" out, to get themselves a little to rights for chapel. Joe Ed'ards rolled home to shave, take a tankard, and mount his box for the day.

Brownlow's first care after chapel was to visit his friend. He found Singleton sleeping restlessly, moaning and tossing on his bed. His face was disfigured by the cork marks; the towels were half on and half off his head; his clothes loose, and tumbled by his feverish movements.

Brownlow felt his hand; it was burning hot. He tried to rouse him, but in vain. After taking counsel of old Titterton on the case before them, he despatched him for the first physician in Oxford; whilst he himself washed his friend's burning face, pulled off Singleton's clothes, and placed him in his bed.

Brownlow then sat himself down beside Singleton. He made many reflections as he watched him, telling himself what folly it was so to use youth as to bring repentance on later years. He determined within himself that the day on which he left the University should be the last day of his youthful wildness, and that he would then begin so to live that no part of his life should arise up to darken his latter years, or to torment him on his death-bed.

Brownlow's meditations were here cut short by the entrance of Titterton, who announced that Dr. Spalding would arrive in a few minutes.

The Doctor, on looking at Singleton, shook his powdered head, saying to Brownlow—

“Drinking—brain fever—pen and ink, and we’ll write.”

Dr. Spalding sat himself down, dipped his pen in the ink, held it up to the light, and began his prescription. When he had done it he leaned back in his chair, and again addressed Brownlow :—

“Strange thing how young men *will* drink. It stops their growth, drinking does. If they began later in life, the constitution being settled, it would do them less harm ; but they begin as boys, before they are half come to perfection. They drink like fish, young gentleman, and *never* come to perfection. They think it manly to be as drunk as an owl. Where’s the manliness of ruining their nerves, and coming to a shaky old age before their time ; beside getting all sorts of diseases from it ? If you could raise up the skulls of the boys here, after they’ve been a couple of hours at wine, and look at their brains, you’d not forget it again. Poor young fellows, I pity them ; I know what it leads to. There’s scarce a man that has lived a college-life that *ever* thoroughly gets over it. He’s sure to have some screw loose to his dying day ; whereas, but for this drinking and rioting, they might have turned out fine, strong, hearty fellows, sound in body and sound in mind : for, let me tell you, my friend, that a sound body has a good deal to do with a sound mind. I do think the way boys are allowed to go on at college is a disgrace to the nation. They’re let loose here from school, full of the spirits and carelessness of youth ; let loose to ruin. These colleges were founded with a view to piety and learning : they have become seats of drunkenness and debauchery. The big-wigs should look into things better than they do. Talk of the army ! I was in the army myself, and it’s quite a sanctified place compared with college. ‘There, my good youth, get that prescription

made up, and I'll come in again in the course of the day. The patient should not be left alone; we shall have hard work with him, I take it. Good morning to you; and don't *you* drink, or you may live to repent it."

So saying, the physician took his fee and his departure, leaving Brownlow to make arrangements concerning Singleton, as well as to write to Mr. Singleton about his son's illness.



## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. GOLDUP.

MR. SINGLETON was in his bed, languidly sipping a cup of green tea as he read Brownlow's letter; whilst Mr. Goldup was sliding, gliding, and hopping about the room, noiselessly preparing everything for the Nabob's arising. The valet did not omit his daily custom, namely, when he emptied his master's waistcoat-pocket of his uncounted card-money, to *hocus-pocus* a guinea into his own breeches-pocket—a trick ever performed by Mr. Goldup with the most dexterous sleight of hand.

"Goldup!" drawled Mr. Singleton.

"Y' sir!" replied Mr. Goldup, sliding up to the bed.

"That boy of mine's ill with a brain fever, or some horrid thing. Pick up my handkerchief, I've dropped it."

Mr. Goldup presented the handkerchief with a bow.

"Bless me, sir," he cried; "how uncommon distressing. Poor Mr. Richard! We must hope for the best. I knew a young gentleman as got over it in very good style indeed, and I really see no reason why Mr. Richard shouldn't. Everything's ready, sir, when you please to get up."

"Young Brownlow says he shall stay and take care of

him. You see it's just vacation time, so I suppose I ought to send you, Goldup, to look after him ; but I shouldn't know how to manage without you."

"Mr. May'met, sir," replied Goldup, charmed at the thoughts of a trip to Oxford.

"Don't talk to me of Mahomet. He's a very clever fellow, but he's never been used to shaving or hair-dressing. That would never do."

"Mr. Rumley, sir ? I'm sure he'd do his best."

"I couldn't bear that huge mass hanging over me, breathing like a sea-monster ; and, besides that, I'm sure he's devilishly heavy handed. I don't know what to do, I'm sure."

"What do you say, sir, to going yourself, and taking Mr. May'met and me along with you ?"

"I shouldn't like that, I think," returned Mr. Singleton, with one of his weary gapes.

"You could put up at the first hotel, sir ; have the best of every *think* just the same as you would here, sir, and be just as comfortable as you are at home. I do think we might make a very pleasant, pretty trip of it, sir ; only, to be sure, there's Mr. Richard so poorly, and all that."

"Don't talk so fast, Goldup ; I've often told you of it : you distract me !"

"Very good, sir."

"Give me another cup of tea, and put a spoonful of sal-volatile in it. That Oxford plan won't do : I can't get on without Blenkins to keep my head above water ; except in town, and there I've Jackson."

"Just so, sir. Allow me to state I've heard that the faculty's remarkable clever at Oxford, sir."

"Ah ! but they don't know all about my feelings, and it would be too much trouble to go into it all for such a short time. I can't do it. What sort of a day is it ?"

"Beautiful fine sunshiny afternoon, sir. Mr. May'met's taking the sun and a cheroot under the nectarine wall, sir."

"What a bore it is he didn't fall sick here."

"So it is, sir; but things always does come so unpleasant. What do you say, sir, to engaging Turner, the barber and hair-dresser, to step up from Warton of a day to dress you, and then I could go and wait on poor Mr. Richard."

"Turner would make a fright and a quizz of me. He's all very well for Mr. Small, but I could not endure him. Take my cup."

Goldup did as he was bid, racking his brain for some new device whereby to bring about his trip to Oxford. Mr. Singleton leaned on his elbow, inwardly congratulating himself that, of all his offspring, none remained but Richard. A cloud passed over his face as thoughts arose within him. He suddenly cast back the bed-clothes with a vivacity that startled Mr. Goldup, who was furtively eyeing himself in the glass, and who had never known Mr. Singleton to behave with such strange activity.

"I'll get up, now, Goldup," he cried. "As for Richard, there will be time to settle all that, when I hear from young Brownlow again: perhaps the boy's not so bad as they think. How I do hate anything that gives one trouble!"

After several gapes Mr. Singleton stepped into his warm bath; Mr. Goldup reading the paper to him as long as he remained there.

Mr. Singleton's toilette being in due time completed, and Mahomet having made his appearance, the nabob, leaning on his "dirty dog's" arm, sallied forth from his chamber, and sought the drawing-room.

There was one daily duty omitted by Mr. Singleton on arising—a duty never performed by him either at morning, evening, or at any other time; and that was the duty of saying his prayers: not that he could be called an atheist,

seeing that he neither professed to believe or to disbelieve. He was one of those creatures who go through life well satisfied to depend upon their fleshy selves alone; who deem the only preparation necessary for death to be the making their will; who, when that is duly signed, sealed, and witnessed, make it their study to put the idea of death and another world entirely out of their thoughts, by means of the pleasures and dissipations of this life; and whose notion of virtue is made up of the idea that other people should always behave amiably, justly, and righteously towards *them*.

Mr. Singleton being one of these miserable mortals, it cannot be wondered at that prayers were by him never dreamt of; and as for going to church, why he was snugly reposing in his bed during service time.

The endeavour to remove every uneasy bodily feeling caused by his failing health was now the chief aim of Mr. Singleton's life: not with any view to keeping death at arm's length—for of death he never thought; but solely for the comfort of each passing moment.

For the amusement of his mind, and the chasing away of unpleasant thoughts, he took care never to be without company in the house. As he had a whole host of acquaintances, as well as a first-rate cook and cellar, this was not difficult to bring about.

Mr. Singleton, on repairing to the drawing-room, there found some of his guests; the rest being abroad to see certain views, ruined abbeys, churches, and castles, which formed the lions of the place.

Mr. Singleton bowed to the assembled company, sought his sofa, and took sugar with lavender drops; the ladies hanging about him with interest and pity, more or less feigned.

The nabob had no objection to be an object of attention

to "*woman*," as the softer sex is now called; a word calling up ideas of spectacles, hard reading, and independence, rather than of the gentle qualities and tender beauty of women.

Mr. Singleton was wont to make a kind of indolent, sleepy, suppressed love to every lady who came near him; a love unseen by all save by the object of the attack. Many a widow and many a spinster of fading charms had built up golden castles on this conduct of the Indian. Their hopes would rise to fabulous heights on a suppressed sigh from Mr. Singleton, or a gentle squeeze of the hand; little wotting that the sigh proceeded from *ennui*, and the rest of his demeanour from habit, and the desire of making the time pass as little disagreeably to himself as possible.

Mr. Singleton said nothing about his son's illness to the assembled company. He sought, indeed, to banish the remembrance of it from his own mind; and succeeded so well, that it was not until on awakening the following afternoon, and finding another bulletin from Brownlow, that this anxious parent thought of his child.

"Goldup!" he cried, with his wonted drawl.

"Y' sir," replied Mr. Goldup, with his accustomed leg and smile.

"There's no need of your going to Oxford!"

"Oh, indeed, sir! I hope Mr. Richard's better?" said the valet, speaking very briskly, to cover his disappointment.

"Read the letter; it will save trouble."

Mr. Goldup was informed by Brownlow's bold, manly characters, that young Singleton was dreadfully ill; but that he had the first physician in Oxford, the best nurse from the county hospital, and the constant attendance and overlooking of his friend Brownlow; that that honest friend would not fail to write daily the whole truth con-

cerning the patient, and would send an express if Mr. Singleton's presence should be necessary.

"Highly satisfactory indeed, sir! Mr. Brownlow's a *di'mon* of the first water," said Mr. Goldup, folding the letter, and politely putting it on the toilette table.

"I needn't think any more about it, unless I get an express, and then it will be time enough. What a comfort!" quoth Mr. Singleton, stretching himself at full length, and rubbing his eyes with his knuckles.

Whilst his only child was tossing, raving, and fighting on his painful bed, with death standing by to pounce upon him if the opportunity should present itself, Mr. Singleton crept lazily from his soft couch, went through the old toilette routine, received Mr. Blenkins' daily visit, took various "placebos," ate mouth-flaying dishes, drank iced drinks, and listened to the conversation of his guests. He spoke but little himself, sitting by and viewing society as he would have done a play got up to save him from an overdose of ennui.

Bulletin followed bulletin from Brownlow, who was very anxious about young Singleton, and seemed by his sick bed to take the place of father, brother, and friend.

As for the nabob, he hurried through Brownlow's short letters; generally tossing them from him, when read, with one of his very expressive gapes; at the same time bidding Goldup to read the discarded epistle, and tear it up.

At length arrived the letter which announced that young Singleton, after a hard and weary struggle, had escaped, weak, nervous and downcast, from the grip of grim death.

Brownlow gave it as his opinion that young Singleton was in so feeble a state, that it would be necessary that his father should send his travelling carriage for him, together with some trustworthy servant and that he should



be removed by easy stages to his home. Brownlow, at the same time, offered to accompany him.

“Confound it, what a bore ! ”

Such were the words with which Mr. Singleton greeted the news of his son's recovery.

Mr. Goldup, who was folding a fine muslin cravat, caught the words as they issued from the nabob's rich sky-blue silk curtains.

“Mr. Richard's not worse, I trust, sir ! ”

“He's quite well again.”

“Oh, indeed, sir ! I'm vastly delighted at the good news. We shall have him among us soon, sir, I hope, for change of air and scene. Besides, sir, as it's the Oxford gentlemen's holiday time—”

“Read the letter ; and don't chatter so infernally ! ”

Mr. Goldup did as his master ordered, whilst a ray of joy shot through his breast. Who should the trusty servant be but him ?

“I suppose I shall have to send you ! ” drawled Mr. Singleton, after a pause.

“Very good, sir.”

“Not good at all. What am *I* to do. The idea of prigs calling children blessings. Ridiculous ! ” cried Mr. Singleton, with some slight attempt at vehemence.

“May I submit a plan, sir, which will, I think, smooth every difficulty ? ”

The nabob having nodded his consent, Mr. Goldup set forth his ideas.

“Why, sir, as your *intimut* old friend, Mr. Pembridge, is expected to-day ; and as he brings his valet, Mr. Sowerby, and as your 'abits, sir, and Mr. Pembridge's coincides considerable ; don't you think, sir, matters might be adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties ? ”

“How ? ”

“Why, sir, if Mr. Pembridge could make it convenient and agreeable to prolong his stay till my return, Mr. Sowerby could valet you, easy, sir; for your hours and Mr. Pembridge’s don’t clash by no means; and a trifle to Mr. Sowerby would be all that we should require. I can put him in the way of *reperesenting* me, sir, so as you wouldn’t know which was which; and Mr. Richard would be properly attended to, and everything as complete as needs be!”

“There, that’ll do; we’ll see about it!” cried Mr. Singleton; whereupon Mr. Goldup bowed, and was silent.

To the valet’s great delight, Mr. Singleton did see about it. Mr. Pembridge being what Mr. Goldup was pleased to call “agreeable and accommodating,” and Mr. Sowerby nearly as clever as Mr. Goldup, matters were soon settled, and orders given for the Oxford journey.

Mr. Goldup, having at break of day “valetted” his master into his soft bed, bowed and took his leave; not, however, without having executed a short dry cough behind his lean hand. The cough was a prelude to these words:—

“Beg pardon, sir, but—you’ll excuse me, I know—the fact is, that—you see, sir, it would be next to *unpossible* for me to travel, sir, not even the first stage a’ posting, which is a expensive style——”

“What the devil are you preaching about?” interrupted Mr. Singleton in muffled tones, and without turning or moving.

“Why, sir, the necessary cash—I’ve none about me—or really, sir, I should not make myself so *onpleasant*—it’s circumstances as obliges me to be so—it quite slipt my memory till now; and I esteem myself quite fortunate in having given it a thought afore I was embarked in the undertaking. What may your orders please to be on the subject, sir?”

“For Heaven’s sake hold your tongue! There’s money somewhere about the room, isn’t there?”

“Y’ sir! How much shall I take, sir?”

“All; and go to the devil, and don’t bore me any more!”

Mr. Goldup’s long, griping fingers soon cleared away the guineas he found about the room; whilst he grinned like an ape at the success of his scheme. He had purposely put off asking for money till the last moment, hoping that matters would fall out just as they had done. And now Mr. Goldup stepped jauntily into the chariot, which was in waiting at the portico.

The two footmen lolled against the door-posts to see him depart. One of them decked his mouth with his tooth-pick, as a modern might do with a cigar; the other bit his nails with great diligence; but neither of them did the honours to Mr. Goldup. He was shut into his vehicle by a stable-boy, Mr. Rumley standing by, and saying—

“Pleasant journey to you, sir; and pray don’t forget that brawn.”

“You may depend upon me, Mr. Rumley, sir! Ta, ta, till I sees you again!”

Off went the chariot, and off went Mr. Goldup; and a very grand figure he cut as he posted along. He was arrayed in a cast-off violet velvet furred and frogged coat of the nabob’s; a velvet travelling cap with gold band and tassel; a shining pair of Hessians; and lemon-coloured knit tights. His shirt-frill was superb, as was the sham diamond shining thereon; in short, Mr. Goldup told himself that he “looked the character admirable;” it being his intention to travel *incog.* as the nabob, feeding on the fat of the land, and taking his pleasure, until he should again sink into the valet.

A day and a half would have been ample time for the

performance of Mr. Goldup's journey; but he thought fit to take three, as he should thus have more breakfasts, dinners, suppers, and beds on the road.

With a view to the proper performance of the character of a rich Indian, Mr. Goldup thought it behoved him to be proud and majestic. He carried his nose on high; put one hand on his hip, the other in his breast; spoke sharply and rudely to every one, and that in as few words as possible, seeing that he felt doubtful as to his grammar and pronunciation.

He would let down the front glasses for the purpose of bellowing to the post-boy that if he did not drive like "fury" he would break every bone in his rascally skin. The last stage he took care to have four horses, informing the boys that if they drove "like the devil" he would not forget them; but that if they crept like confounded snails he would thrash them within an inch of their lives!

"Yes, your honour!" the boys would reply. Crack! went the whip; the horses flew; so did the dust; onward was Mr. Goldup madly borne, until he dashed up the main street of country towns, to the staring of quiet folk; the barking of dogs; the rushing of cocks and hens disturbed in their feastings; and the "I wonder who it can be?" of the curious. Then into the yard of the chief inn he was whisked. Bells rang; waiters ran; landlord and landlady shrieked "Boots!" bowed, curtsied, and asked the illustrious traveller if he would not alight.

"Open the door!" replied Mr. Goldup, harshly; then emerged from his carriage, Hessians and all.

"My rascal here?"

"No, sir, can't say he is," returned "landlord," with a bow.

"Confound the d—d fellow! He's drunk again somewhere on the road."

“Can’t say, sir—not unlikely.”

“I must have your best parlour, best bedroom, and bill of fare!—D’ye hear?”

“*Cerd’nly*, sir! This way, if you please,” said the landlord, bowing, and pointing sideways with a thumb much turned back.

Then Mr. Goldup majestically mounted the stairs, viewed his rooms contemptuously; ordered his dinner superciliously; and remembered the postboys magnificently—with his master’s money.

Pending dinner, Mr. Goldup would parade the town; pointing his toes; kicking dogs; “ogling” pretty girls; and looking in at the shop windows.

Then at one halting-place the proud valet engaged the stage box, and, after a sumptuous dinner, repaired to the theatre, to see “The Castle Spectre.” This terrible drama was followed by the farce of “High Life below Stairs:” a farce which hit Mr. Goldup several hard raps on the knuckles, he making a point of applauding every passage which did so. There were various comic songs, in character, between the acts, all of which brought down much applause; especially one song by a Quaker in full costume, who, entering slowly, stiffly, and without bowing, began his song as follows:—

“Yea! I fell in the pit of love  
With a to-tum-ti!  
The spirit then began to move  
With a to-tum-ti!”

The “to-tum-ti” was accompanied by the twirling of the singer’s thumbs; and the song concluded by informing the British public there assembled, how the Quaker’s rival kicked him ignominiously “with his to-tum-ti!” The applause was uproarious, Mr. Goldup setting the example of calling for an encore.

It is not to be imagined that the nabob, on arriving at Oxford, meekly went and reported himself to his young master. Not at all. Having, about noon, dashed up to the very hotel in which Dr. Savory and young Singleton had once solaced themselves, he there ordered a first-rate dinner for three o'clock ; inquired if " my drunken rascal " had not been seen ; and proceeded to hop, skip, and jump all over Oxford, in order to see all that was to be seen, and to buy Mr. Rumley's brawn.

When dusk began to brush light and shade into middle tint, Mr. Goldup, arousing himself from a doze on the sofa, despoiled himself of his velvet coat and Hessians ; arrayed himself in broad-cloth and humble pumps ; crowned his head with a tall white hat, lined with green ; and so sought — College. He told the waiter, as he sallied forth, that he was going to see his son, who was recovering from a dreadful fever, and that he should require pickled salmon, cold chicken, ham, and bottled ale, at ten "*pre-e*-cisely."

In dull vacation times, events are known and talked of which, at any other time, would not be noticed. Richard Singleton's illness, " brain fever, brought on from drinking ! " was known all over Oxford. It was now reported in the hotel, that his father, the rich East Indian, had come to see him, and to take him home. Whilst " chambermaid " was diverting " under-chambermaid " by dressing herself up in the nabob's velvet coat and cap, whilst the waiters were chattering about the rich man, and landlady was wondering what the diamond in his shirt-frill would " fetch," the sham nabob was standing obsequiously, hat in hand, before the poor, languid, peevish, meagre " three-bottle man " of — College.

" Glad to see you looking so much yourself, Mr. Richard, sir," quoth Mr. Goldup : young Singleton looking all teeth, eyes, and hair. " I left my excellent master as well as

could be expected—always delicate, you know, sir, always delicate: the East is apt to overbalance the liver, sir. But he bade me say as he should be happy to see you any day you please to name; and I was to add he hoped to be favoured with your company, Mr. Brownlow, sir, for as long as you can make it convenient, Mr. Pembridge is a staying with Mr. Singleton till we returns, gentlemen; Mr. Sowerby, his man's a standing in my shoes, valetting my esteemed master *dooring* my absence. What day do you please to appoint for your return, Mr. Richard, sir? *Charrut's* as easy as a glove; runs on castors, as 'twere; it will be no fatigue to you, I'm persuaded, sir."

"Don't make such a confounded row, Goldup!" cried young Singleton, peevishly. "Just take him out of the room, Brownlow, there's a good fellow, and settle it all. Let's go to-morrow; I'm sick to death of this infernal place!"

Here Richard fell into a faint perspiration; and Brownlow left the room with Mr. Goldup.

The following day, at ten o'clock, A.M., the valet's career as a nabob came to an end. After a breakfast, to which his appetite did justice, and which did justice to his taste, Mr. Goldup, velvet-clad, stepped into the chariot at the gates of the hotel, to emerge from it at those of —— College in the garb of Goldup the valet; a tall white hat on his head, and a large roll of brawn beneath his arm.

The ostler, who had accompanied the carriage, started on seeing the being into whom he opined that the nabob had been conjured. The valet calmly threw the brawn up on the seat behind, winked at the ostler, cried "All right, old star-gazer!" and sought young Singleton's rooms.

And now the chariot was whisking along as fast as four strong nags could take it, the ex-nabob perched up behind, with folded arms and hat on one side, humming a brisk

country dance, as trees and hedges seemed to fly past him.

Mr. Goldup had so ordered the journey, that it was to be performed in two days; he taking great care that his master should not sleep at any of the hotels at which he had himself rested. He, moreover, did not omit to pull his cravat up to his nose, and his hat over that same feature, whenever horses were changed, and payment made, at the inns he had visited in his glory.

Singleton laid himself back in his corner of the chariot, weak and fraictious; whilst Brownlow viewed the smiling country with a smiling heart; one only reflection dimming for an instant the brightness of his soul.

Singleton, as they journeyed along, was killing time by burying himself in the "Sorrows of Werter," an amusement much more to his taste than "tooling drags," or any other of the diversions he had lately given himself to.

"What are you reading?" inquired Brownlow.

"Oh, I don't know! The 'Sorrows of Werter,' " returned Singleton, peevishly; and looked somewhat ashamed of his occupation.

"That's a book I never *could* read. I can't understand it; can't make head or tail of it: however, every one says it's very fine; and the women cry over it; so I suppose it's all right."

Young Singleton made no reply; and Brownlow began to question whether he had acted wisely, in attempting to make a manly fellow of a being who appeared to take so much delight in such a work as the "Sorrows of Werter." When he looked on the small, brown, delicate hands that held the book, and then glanced at his friend's worn and sickly face, his own became crimson.

"By Heaven! I did wrong, though I did it for the best! What an ass I have been! I've misled that poor fellow: I



have, by Jove! I should have let him take the bookworm and German flute line. It's all my fault that he's had this illness. I'll advise him to give up drinking, and all that. The doctor told him not to come back to college, that's one comfort; and it was very honest and kind of him to be so open, though Singleton did kick at it. I hope he'll get all right again. Poor fellow! I can never do enough for him to make amends for my folly! One should let people go their own way; I'll never interfere with any man again; never!"

These thoughts cast Brownlow's spirits down for awhile. He eyed Singleton ever and anon with a rueful and pitying countenance, saying—

"The change has done you good already; hasn't it, old boy? Eh?"

To which Singleton, torn so often from the sorrows he was revelling in, at last replied—

"Oh! *don't* bore so, Brownlow; there's a good fellow!"

On arriving at Singleton Hall, Richard went to bed, and Brownlow went to dinner; receiving very polite thanks from the nabob for his kindness to his boy, and for the many letters he had written to him. Brownlow replied as became him; although he felt much disgusted with Mr. Singleton's coolness about his son, as well as at the little concern he showed for him.



## CHAPTER X.

### LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

DURING that miserable period of illness at which a struggling recovery begins, and a sickly craving is felt for divers things which the sick man thinks will give him comfort

and delight, Singleton's mind had fastened greedily on the idea of sitting beneath a certain plane-tree in Mrs. Adams' garden ; there to smell the sweet perfume of the flowers ; to listen to the birds ; to feel the cool breeze ; to eat home-made cake, to drink home-made wine. Rose Adams was to sit beside him, to listen to the selfish recounting of his woes ; whilst to Janet he might read his poetry ; she being ever willing to lend an ear to his inspirations. It was no very high-flying desire ; but *that* desire was his ; and he would think on it in his sick bed until he could hear in fancy the gurgling of the little stream that ran through Rose's garden, could feel the fresh and fanning breeze, could see Rose's kind blue eyes and pure white dress ; until he could hear her pleasant laugh and silvery voice ; until, in short, he began to fall in love with the recollection of the playmate of his childhood.

Yes ! Singleton amused his languid hours by falling in love with Rose Adams ; by falling in love with her at the distance of many a long mile, and without beholding her.

The new love did not, however, destroy the old one. Singleton loved Almeria just as strongly as ever : she was the planet ; Rose was a mildly shining star.

Brownlow, having walked over to the Fotheringays the day after his arrival at Singleton Hall, brought back the information that he had only seen Tommy and the Rev. Septimus Barnett ; the remainder of the family being on a visit many miles distant.

The name of Septimus Barnett never failed to awaken a storm of jealousy and rage in Richard Singleton's breast ; together with a longing desire to do that young ecclesiastic some grievous bodily harm. On the present occasion these amiable feelings were accompanied by a sudden increase in his love-fever for Almeria ; owing to the knowledge that she was in gay and agreeable society ; receiving the

attentions of lively, pleasant young fellows ; and not thinking of him.

“ You want me to drive you somewhere in the tandem, don't you, Singleton ? ” Brownlow inquired of his friend, after having given his account of the Fotheringays. “ I'm your man now, or whenever you like.”

Richard had wished Brownlow to drive him over to the Adams', in order to make a reality of his plane-tree visions. Now, however, the hurly-burly in his heart overclouded all his sylvan prospects, just as the calm blue sky is overcast by a heavy thunder-cloud.

“ Oh, I don't care ! ” he answered ; “ I don't want to go to-day ! ”

Brownlow, however, was not to be discouraged. After a little persuasion on his part, and a due proportion of peevishness on Singleton's, they started for the Adams' peaceful dwelling.

Richard Singleton felt no gratitude for all Brownlow's persevering kindness towards him ; he took it all as a matter of course ; he would have taken the sacrifice of a friend's life as his due, and as the natural conduct of one friend towards another. His conduct towards Brownlow was widely different, being one tissue of selfishness, peevishness, and contrariety. Brownlow still cherished him through pity, and a feeling that it would be disloyal to give “ the poor fellow ” up, as no one else seemed to like him. Brownlow, therefore, compassionately cherished Singleton ; whilst Singleton bitterly hated Brownlow.

During their drive, Brownlow whistled and sang ; Singleton passed the time in feeding on his own vitals : a diet which ever renders the victim lean and moody.

When they drew up at Mrs. Adams', Rose, who had seen them coming, stood in the porch to receive them. The green leaves of the jessamine which grew over it, and the

shade they cast within it, brought out Rose and her white dress and pink ribands to great advantage. Her soft blue eyes looked with kindness and affection on Singleton as she nodded smilingly at him, saying how glad she was to see him again. Then she went in for an instant to call Mrs. Adams and Janet.

"Introduce me, old boy," was all that Brownlow said to Singleton; but Brownlow, after the first careless look, had riveted his eyes on Rose: had heard her voice; had felt a sudden flame in his heart. He had noted that her affection for Singleton was nought but friendship; whereat he felt a great joy and satisfaction, to which he gave vent by touching up the leader.

"D—n it, what are you about, man!" cried Singleton, who was getting down as the leader started, and nearly brought him suddenly to earth.

"Beg pardon," returned Brownlow, again fixing his eyes on Rose as she appeared in the porch behind her mother and sister.

Singleton was received most kindly by the three ladies. He introduced his friend, who, bowing, said he would drive into town, put up the horses, and be back in a minute.

How the smart fellows of Warton gazed with delight on the tandem and team, and how the young ladies, abroad for their afternoon walk, looked with admiration on the driver, as Brownlow tore full speed along the street. How unconscious was Brownlow of all this admiration, and how he hurried back on foot to Mrs. Adams' cottage, wishing to make sure that it really did contain a fair being clad in white garments—a fair being with white delicate features, kind blue eyes, silken hair, little fragile hands and feet, and a soft, yet merry voice. Such a being *might* be there. Brownlow was half inclined to look upon it as a vision. It was, however, no vision. Beneath the plane-tree Brownlow

again beheld Rose, in all the freshness-of her innocent mirth and beauty.

Mrs. Adams, who, as people are apt to do who have known a young man as a child, still looked upon Singleton as "little black boy," no sooner heard how in his sickness he had longed for the peaceful shade of her garden, than she forthwith ordered out the home-made cake and wine, and with her daughters conducted him beneath the plane-tree.

There Brownlow rejoined them. Richard, with a complacent smile, was talking of himself, and feasting his eyes on Rose; she listening with her usual good nature, little wotting what his feelings were towards her. She dreamt not that he was likening her to Charlotte, and that he was getting up Werterlike sentiments towards her.

Young Singleton's face clouded over on the arrival of Brownlow. No one observed the change, however; and Brownlow, with a joyous heart, took a chair beside Rose; whilst Janet cut a slice of cake for him, and Mrs. Adams gave him a glass of the cool, sparkling wine.

Brownlow was one of those fortunate people whom everyone like the moment they know them. His good and unselfish nature shone out in his looks and manner, engaging the goodwill and affection of his fellow-mortals without the least trouble on his part; he never thinking whether people cared about him or not.

On the present occasion, the presence of Rose raised his spirits so agreeably, that he shone even more than usual. Young Singleton became peevish as the others became gay; finally sinking into moodiness, and enjoying his old childish feelings, as to their being, Rose and all, "*nasty things*" that he hated.

If a mortal gets up some particular treat for his own especial delight, that mortal is certain to find the said treat fall short of his expectations.

Thus it was with Richard, beneath Mrs. Adams' plane-tree. Brownlow, without meaning or caring to be so, was the star of the company there assembled; whilst Singleton, who meant to have been petted and deified, was mortified and disappointed.

Brownlow, chancing to look towards him, perceived the gloom of his visage, and the fierceness of his eyes.

"Tired, old fellow?" he asked, in a good-naturedly anxious tone.

In answer, Richard muttered, "Don't bore!" and helped himself to wine.

"Go in and lie on the sofa, Richard, till the tandem comes. You're not strong; you must take care of yourself, and not do too much," quoth Mrs. Adams compassionately.

Janet looked anxiously at Richard, but no word passed her lips.

"Nonsense!" replied Singleton, peevishly, frowning on Mrs. Adams; "I'm very well off where I am."

So saying, Singleton sat himself down beside Rose, to whom he began to talk very low, leaving Brownlow to Mrs. Adams and Janet. Rose did not give her attention to him as she wished to do, and as she was wont to do: it would wander off from his selfish discourse, to what Brownlow was saying. Singleton perceived this; as well as certain efforts made by Brownlow to bring Rose into the conversation; all of which so piqued him, that he said, in the passionate tone of his childhood, "Rose! you're not attending to me."

She meekly replied, "I beg your pardon, Richard."

Brownlow heard what had passed; and the manner in which Rose had said, "I beg your pardon, Richard," mightily stirred up the flame that was beginning to burn within his honest breast. When the tandem was announced, Singleton arose briskly from his seat, saying—

"Come, Brownlow! Good morning!" Accompanying "Good morning!" with a sweeping bow to the Adams', he walked off; Mrs. Adams excusing his conduct on account of the state of his health.

Brownlow took a more lengthened leave. When he held Rose's little hand in his, he felt his heart beat; looking on her downcast eyes the while, and noting the pink tint that spread over her cheeks and mounted to her forehead.

"Two nice girls," quoth Brownlow, as the horses flew along, and he encouraged them to do their best.

"Not got a penny, you know!" replied Singleton, moodily.

"Don't want it, old boy, with such faces."

"Don't they, though?" returned Richard, with a sneer.

Brownlow was right. With such comely faces as Janet and Rose possessed, they stood in small need of fortune.

Rose has been already described. Janet, from a fine and merry child, had become a fine, well-grown, well-formed girl. Her sparkling black eyes, full of sense and good-nature, shone kindly on all her fellow mortals. Her brown and ruddy cheeks, and cherry lips, added to the whiteness of her small and even teeth; whilst her glossy black hair set off the healthy richness of her complexion.

Janet's soul was as bright and healthy as her complexion. She was sensible, without a particle of "strong-mindedness;" kind, and so full of charity, that she would not see faults and failings in others, turning with a sickening heart from the gossip and backbiting in which the world is over fond of indulging.

Why did Janet love Richard Singleton? It is hard to say *why* one human being's heart is given to another. One thing is certain: Janet did not look on Richard from the same point of view from which most people beheld him.

She admired his talent and genius, so different from her own plain good sense ; whilst his faults were, in her sight, but slight blemishes, from which, if he chose, he might easily free himself.

In their childhood, Richard had ever been to Janet and Rose an object of tender pity. They looked upon him as a kind of orphan, whom it behoved them to cherish and love. Often had the two little sisters shed tears over his hard fate, when cradled in each other's arms at night : they pitied the poor little boy who had no tender mother to watch over and guide him—no brothers and sisters to play with him and love him.

Rose's feelings towards Richard were still the feelings of her childhood. She pitied him, loving him with sisterly love, whilst she saw his faults, pitying him the more on account of those very faults—faults with which she bore meekly and sweetly as ever.

Janet's first sorrow had been Richard's Oxford career, of which tidings had reached the Adams' cottage. When she beheld him in vacation time, parading about with the air and manner of a stage-coachman, she felt inclined to weep bitter tears over his degradation.

With a kind of humble tenderness she ventured to touch upon his conduct, and to inspire him with a love of better things than the follies which occupied him.

Singleton felt the truth of every word so kindly and gently uttered by Janet. He laughed, however, pretending to scorn her words, and to turn them into ridicule ; yet so well pleased was he with being made sole object of the discourse, that he would ever bring her back to what he was pleased to call her "motherly advice." He listened with avidity to all she said ; but the seed she so diligently sowed was blown away by vanity before it had time to take root.



Janet hoped that Richard laid her words to heart. In spite of scoffing and bantering, she perceived that he listened to her; that he brought the conversation round to the "motherly advice," whenever it was not likely to be overheard; and on this Janet fondly built her hopes.

She wished to act the part of a sister towards the friend of her childhood; doing her best, in order that he might not be without one heart on which he could repose. "Poor Richard!" she would say to herself, "he has never known the tender love of father or mother. He has had no one to advise him; no one to correct him. Oh, if I could but persuade him to be all that he might be!"

Janet's whole thoughts were bent on Richard; the hope of her life was to lead him into the path of real happiness.

When a spark of love has once settled on the tinder of the heart, quick as thought it spreadeth itself to the consuming of the said tinder. The match of opportunity being applied thereto, the whole man is speedily in so great a blaze, that it will oft-times fall out, that not all the waters of adversity, of absence, and of a hard fortune, will be of power great enough to put out the flames kindled by a small spark.

The spark which had darted from Rose Adams' eyes to the tinder of Brownlow's heart, spread during the night, having so marvellous an effect that when he arose in the morning, everything he thought on seemed tinged with a beautiful rose colour. The sun appeared to him to shine with a splendour unseen till that day; the voices of the birds seemed supernaturally loud, clear, and merry. As for the white butterflies, disporting themselves about a bank of pink convolvulus, they looked, so thought Brownlow, just like the fluttering of Rose's dress; whilst the flowers brought her pink ribands to his mind. As he dressed,

he sang so gaily, that poor Singleton, who slept in the next room, was fain to call out to him, begging him in fractious tones to leave off.

“I say!” he cried, “don’t go on so about the red, red rose, Brownlow; you make one as nervous as a cat!”

“All right! How are you, old fellow? Did you *ever* see such a morning? Look at those butterflies! they’re just like the fluttering of a white gown. What a row the birds are kicking up! It does one’s heart good to hear them.

‘Oh! my love’s like the red, red rose  
That’s freshly sprung in June;  
Oh! my love’s like a melody,  
That’s sweetly played in tune!’

Oh! I forgot, Singleton; beg your pardon; I’ll be quiet. This is the weather to cure you! It’ll do you more good than all old Blenkins’ preparations.

‘So fair art thou, my bonny lass,  
So deep in love ———’

Dence take it! I forgot again.”

Brownlow performed the remainder of his toilet in silence.

Singleton loitered over his in a frame of mind very different from his friend’s. There was nothing rose-coloured in Richard’s meditations; they were of a dark hue, which Brownlow’s singing and merriment did not tend to lighten. Singleton felt sure that the “red, red rose” had something to do with Rose Adams. This idea gave him a feverish desire to spoil Brownlow’s wooing; not that Singleton dreamt of making Rose his wife. Almeria was, by him, destined to become his second self; but then, no one was to succeed in anything but *him*—not even in gaining Rose’s heart. He thought not of Rose’s feelings during his dark

meditations. His own were all that he dwelt upon; allowing the unchecked idolatry of self—that betrayer of man’s soul—to fill him with the meanest thoughts; moreover, suffering himself to be led on to action by such thoughts. It is true that he was, to a certain degree, in love with Rose; yet it was rather envy of Brownlow, and ruffled vanity, than love for her, that were now spurring him on.

Brownlow ate a good breakfast; good spirits give a good appetite. Singleton fidgeted over his; gloomy spirits ever spoil the appetite.

No sooner had Brownlow finished his repast, than he announced that he was bound for a walk to Warton; then, shaking Singleton by the shoulder in a friendly manner, he asked how he meant to dispose of himself.

“I don’t know yet; never mind me. You do just as you like: we shall meet at dinner.”

“All right!” replied Brownlow, not knowing that it was Singleton’s intention to get rid of him, and pay a visit to the Adams’ without him.

Thinking that his friend wished for a quiet day, Brownlow walked off in high spirits to Warton; vaulting over five-barred gates; leaping over stiles; and singing in the joy of his heart.

There is a certain degree of stratagem about even the most virtuous love. It was Brownlow’s intention to drop in at the Adams’, as though he had expected to meet Singleton.

Brownlow, on reaching Rose’s abode, rang somewhat timidly, and casting down his eyes, tapped the toe of his boot with his cane. He listened with vast interest to the advancing steps of the maid, asked vivaciously if Mrs. Adams was at home; and, on being told that she was, felt inclined to vault over the gate, and shout “Hurrah!”

As Brownlow entered the house, it appeared to his rose-coloured sight to be a kind of fairy land. The jessamine-covered porch smelt so sweetly, and felt so fresh and cool after the hot sun and dusty road ; and then the hall was cooler still ; and the flowers in the large jar in the latticed window were even sweeter than the jessamine without. There was a canary bird, moreover, singing very briskly beyond the reach of the most determined cat. Brownlow, who was sure the bird was Rose's, thought there never was so bright a canary, or one who sang so well. He *was* making a great noise.

Mrs. Adams and Rose were sitting at work in the drawing-room. Mrs. Adams looked surprised on seeing Brownlow ; Rose only looked pleased. Brownlow felt a little out of breath, and somewhat confused ; however, he rallied in an instant ; and after an apology for so early a visit, saying that he thought his friend Singleton was at the cottage, he began a series of manœuvres with a view to flirtation with Rose : if such serious, true love-making as he intended his to be, can be called by the silly, giggling, tittering name of flirtation.

Two whole hours did Brownlow remain beneath Mrs. Adams' roof : two happy hours, which seemed to him but one. He had talked to Rose ; he had sung duets with Rose ; he had listened to Rose's little, childish, silvery voice, as she sang to him ; he had helped Rose to arrange a quantity of flowers which her sister brought in from the garden ; and he had left Rose promising to *send* her the next day a new book which she had not seen, and which he meant to *send* by taking it to her himself.

Brownlow went far afield for many a long mile on that fine summer's day, thinking on the events of the morning, and chalking out a sketchy view of his future life. In this sketch, however, there was one finished figure, and that

figure was Rose. Brownlow had seen her but twice, and yet he had firmly resolved that, as far as he was concerned, she should be his for life. So rapid is love: can the far-famed electric telegraph come up to it?

Brownlow felt that Rose *might* be won by him; that she viewed him kindly; and Brownlow felt so happy he thought he had never known what happiness was before.

“I am just of age, and what is called very young to marry; and many a fellow would say I am about to give up my liberty. I don’t want liberty in that sense. I don’t want to indulge in dissipation. I’ve a good estate, and plenty of money: all I want is a charming wife, and Rose will make one. By George! it’s far better to settle down to a useful, happy life, with one’s youth, health, and strength about one, than to fritter them and one’s fortune away in vicious courses; and then, when little of the cup remains but the bitter dregs, to marry as a last resource: settling down discontented, unhappy, and sickly, to a life one is thoroughly unfit for. That would never do for me! No! I’ll marry as soon as I can, and Rose shall be my wife!”

Singleton, after passing a solitary morning, drove out, with his groom beside him, in a smart yellow “buggy” to call on the Adams’. He hoped to have everything his own way without Brownlow, wherefore his vexation was great on finding an admirer of Rose already in the field. This was no other than the Rev. Sylvester Evelyn, the new vicar of Warton, younger son of the patron of the said family living. To use a French phrase, Sylvester Evelyn had been “*voué au sacerdoce*” from his birth—nay, in a manner, before his birth; his parents having settled that “if it should be a boy,” the expected babe should in due course undertake the cure of souls in Warton; seeing that it would be an immense pity that a thousand a year should fall to the lot

of any one out of the family, however worthy a use he might make of that income.

The living had been given to some younger branch of the family ever since it had come into the hands of the Evelyns in the days of that gigantic tyrant King Hal, the eighth of the name, who had bestowed it on one of their ancestors, when love and anger spurred him on to spoliation and reform.

As the Evelyns were, with very few exceptions, among those persons in whom the flesh unduly overweighs the spirit, the good town of Warton had been blessed with but two or three good pastors since Henry VIII.'s time. It was consequently much graced with various Zions, Ebenezers, Salems, and Mount Ephraims ; from whence rabid preaching, and melancholy spiritual warblings, issued forth when " the methodists " met together. By far the larger portion of the community were dissenters of " divers persuasions," who maintained their own ministers among themselves ; besides aiding in supporting the thousand-a-year pastors of the house of Evelyn.

The present incumbent, and a great incumbrance he was, had just reached his twenty-sixth year. The living had been held, whilst he was supposed to be training his mind and preparing his soul for the mighty task before him, by a well-read bachelor of temperate habits ; who out of his stipend had put by some thousand pounds, on the proceeds of which he now retired to lead a life of study, and of book-worm eccentricity. This personage did but little for the parish. Sylvester Evelyn did less. He opined that a clerical life was " a jolly life enough, as times go." He likewise held that it was an abomination to see a clergyman in the hunting-field in any coat but a black one, or maybe a gray one with black buttons ; that it behoved him to have a " let off " at Christmas for the people ; that the curate was the man to write sermons, and to deliver them from

the "chattering box;" as also to attend to the sick and dying; to bury the dead in bad weather;

"To christen a poor baby,  
With as much speed as may be,"

if the said poor baby saw fit to depart in the night time; never to be ruffled; and to make himself generally useful. For all this he was to receive one hundred pounds yearly.

Great expectations had been raised in Warton about the new Vicar. Old gentlemen speculated as to his politics; old ladies as to his doctrine; young men hoped he would be a good fellow; and young ladies thought much about vicars' wives. The "methodists" all declared that he would be no better than those Warton parsons who had gone before him.

The bells rang merrily to welcome the Rev. Silly, as Sylvester was called among his intimates. The divine arrived in a high phaeton, where he sat muffled up in a box-coat; accompanied by a sporting-dog, and a sporting cousin, his bosom friend.

The old gentlemen of Warton soon found out that the Rev. Silly had no politics; and the old ladies that he had no doctrines; whilst the young men discovered that he had no brains; and the young ladies that he had no gallantry. The "methodists" said they had known all along how it would be; but of these discoveries and opinions Sylvester Evelyn knew nothing, and if he had, they would not have disturbed the stagnant waters of his soul.

As young Singleton drove up to the Adams', he observed an impatient-looking nag tied to a paling. It was the Vicar's steed; and the Vicar himself was sitting stupidly staring at Rose, in the cool sweet-smelling drawing-room which had so charmed Brownlow's senses.

On being introduced to Singleton by Mrs. Adams, Evelyn arose, turned his eyes from Rose, bringing those blue orbs to bear on Richard, and saying, in a voice which seemed to

proceed from a mouth over full of plums—" 'Pom m' honour, hope you'll excuse me." After these words he again seated himself, and again fixed his eyes on Rose ; such being his mode of showing admiration, and of "courting," as he was pleased to call it.

Evelyn was in appearance very much like a great, fat, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired baby. His beardless face was pink and soft ; his features round and infantine. His hands were plump and short-fingered ; his figure tall, yet cupid-like. He was the most good-natured and the most apathetic of men ; a kind of placid, sweet-tempered zoophyte ; over fond of drinking ; silent but not meditative ; ignorant, inoffensive, and useless.

This rev. gentleman had fixed his affections on Rose Adams. He sometimes lost his place in reading prayers on Sunday, because he would stare at her. It is true that he dotted down his baby finger on the book to mark his place, whilst *he* gazed, and the clerk boggled and quavered ; yet, in spite of this, he came in again all wrong, to the scandal of the congregation and to the horror of the clerk ; who, loudly prompting, would try to put him in the right road.

The "courting" of the Vicar, although it was no bar to the talking of Singleton, yet caused him to feel wrathful with Sylvester ; as he chose to decree that no one but himself had a right to attempt making the slightest inroad on the heart of Rose.

Singleton's anger was further roused by hearing that Brownlow had passed the morning at Mrs. Adams'.

"I dare say you found him a very pleasant fellow," said Singleton. Mrs. Adams having replied that she did, he continued : "What a pity it is that he should be such a dissipated dog !"

"Is he ?"



"Oh! like all those easy, good-natured people, he may be led away to anything."

"It really is a pity; he seems so amiable and kind."

"So he is, and a great favourite of every lady he comes near. If you don't take care you'll have him here every day making love to your daughters. What do you think of Brownlow—eh, Rose?"

As he made this question, Singleton fixed his large black eyes full on Rose, who returned his look innocently, saying as she did so—

"I've only seen him twice: he's very agreeable!"

"Don't lose your heart to him, that's all: you'll find it a losing game, I can tell you!"

Singleton felt a degree of malignant joy in seeing signs in Mrs. Adams' countenance which showed that his malice had taken effect. Under the influence of his satisfaction he talked with Rose, turning his back on the Rev. Silly, who, being a tall man, could, however, see her over young Singleton's head. After gazing and sighing in silence for some time, Evelyn arose, put out his fat hand to Mrs. Adams, shook hers slowly, and said, still staring at Rose—

"*Pom m'* honour, hope you'll excuse me, Miss Rose; I must be off."

The Vicar had no sooner left than Singleton began to exercise his wit on him, pulling him mercilessly to pieces, and bringing forward all the stories he had heard to his disadvantage.

Rose laughed, and so did Singleton, until Mrs. Adams reproved them for so lightly making merry with the weaknesses and faults of their neighbour; winding up with saying that every living being, even the most perfect, was not without blemish.

This old truth stung Singleton, and he remained silent awhile, asking himself what *his* blemish could possibly be.

He could find none, in spite of the oft-listened-to advice of Janet ; wherefore he again rallied, and continued making covert love to Rose.

On bringing his visit to an end, Singleton sighed, and gave a Werter-like look at Rose ; which, however, were both lost on her, to his no small mortification. They were not, however, lost on Janet. Her bright spirit felt saddened by Richard's look at her sister ; but there was no ill-feeling or jealousy in the sadness that came over her like a passing cloud. He rejoiced as he drove home at the impression he hoped he had given Mrs. Adams of Brownlow, and which he trusted would bring forth the fruit he intended.

On meeting Singleton, on his return, Brownlow failed not to inform him that he had seen the Adams', adding that "they" all asked very kindly after Richard, who in his turn gave Brownlow an account of the visit he had paid to them ; together with the information that a lover of Rose's was sitting with them ; that he seemed tremendously smitten with her ; and that he was none other than the rich Vicar of Warton. Singleton wound up by saying—

"The old lady don't seem to set her face against it. She's in a hurry to marry those girls ; and a thousand a year would be no bad haul for a schoolmistress like Rose !"

"Schoolmistress !—What do you mean ?"

"Yes, schoolmistress ! Don't you know about it ?" Singleton then proceeded to recount Mrs. Adams' history. Instead of taking the effect on Brownlow which he intended it should do, it only served to fan his flame, and to make him burn with impatience to rescue *his* Rose from the wearisome task of teaching.

When Brownlow thought on Rose's delicate figure and gentle face, and then painted her in his imagination hearing lessons, setting copies, teaching arithmetic, and bearing with the carelessness of some children and the stupidity of

others, he remained silent and musing. Singleton rejoiced, thinking that he had begun the undermining of Rose with great adroitness.

When Brownlow, panting with impatience, called at the cottage the following day with the promised book, there was something about Mrs. Adams' manner that he could not explain to himself. She was not distant; and yet she was not as she had been before. She seemed, moreover, to watch him narrowly as he talked with Rose; and he once saw her eyeing him with an air of doubt and distrust, that hurt his honest heart and crimsoned his face.

By Janet he was received without any change of conduct. She gave no heed to Singleton's words concerning him: they rested not in her charitable heart. She believed that Richard was mistaken in what he had said, and so dismissed his malicious hints from her mind.

"What 's it all about?" Brownlow asked himself, as he paced towards Singleton Hall, more in love with Rose than ever.

After much reflection, he felt certain that Mrs. Adams thought that he was not in earnest with Rose, and that he had shown his love for her too soon. Being young and hasty, Brownlow turned back as soon as he had come to this conclusion, determined to rush into the presence of Mrs. Adams, to declare himself to her, and to get her formal leave to woo, win, and wed Rose.

On arriving with an impetus on him, he rang violently at the gate. Mrs. Adams was out, and the servant could not tell him where she was gone to.

"Don't you know at all?" asked Brownlow quickly.

"Well, sir, I heard Miss Rose naming something about going into Warton; but I don't know, I'm sure."

That was enough for Brownlow. He dashed off to Warton, not reflecting that he could not make his declaration either in shop or street.

Brownlow tore wildly about the town, diving into shops and rushing out again, all in the vain hope of once again meeting Mrs. Adams, but Mrs. Adams he met not. As he passed her cottage on his way home, he again violently rang the bell. This time he received for answer that Mrs. Adams was at home; but that she was not alone, having one or two guests with her.

“Oh, very well! Ah! my compliments, and never mind!”

With these words Brownlow strode away, whilst the maid went in to puzzle her mistress by saying—

“If you please, ma’am, Mr. Brownlow’s compliments, and never mind.”

When Singleton had once set his mind on anything, let it be trifling, or let it be weighty, he was not to be turned from his ends. He had decreed that no man but himself was to possess the affections of Rose Adams; and although in his heart he cared not one jot for the poor girl’s love, save as an offering to his selfish vanity, the depriving Brownlow of it became to his morbid soul a matter of life and death. Day after day found him at the cottage beside Rose, making love by languishing looks and sentimental innuendoes, letting fall a word here and there with a view to undermining his friend, and ruining him in the minds of Rose and her mother.

As, however, Rose did not respond to his wooing as Richard had hoped and expected that she would have done, this selfish young man opined that by arousing her vanity, and by exciting her jealousy, he should succeed better than he had hitherto done. To accomplish his design, he cast his eyes upon Janet—good and faithful Janet, and to her little by little he began paying court.

Janet had never dreamt that Singleton—talented, learned Singleton—could love *her*! How her heart beat with joy

when Richard's well-feigned affection led her to suppose that he thought of her—that he loved her ! It seemed to Janet an enchanting dream, from which she might, however, soon awake, to find herself the Janet she had been before, uncared for by the being she loved so well.

Love is a strange thing, and works strange changes. Janet, who had never in her life built so much as a cottage in the air, would sit musing and building lordly airy castles—all for Singleton's happiness—all for Singleton's glorification and greatness.

If Singleton could but have looked into the depths of the heart he was playing with—if he could but have known in what true happiness consists—he would have rested his head on Janet's loving bosom, there to have found the peace his evil passions withheld from him.

Right is right, and sooner or later Truth will appear, springing from her well, looking-glass in hand.

Brownlow had agreed to spend a month at Singleton Hall. At the end of that period of time, his love for Rose had become a kind of fond idolatry ; and yet, thanks to young Singleton's crooked ways and mean undermining, a cloud seemed to settle over his heart every now and then. At times he felt perplexed : he knew not why. This was ever when absent from Rose : the sight of her, the sound of her voice, at once brought back peace of mind and joy of heart to her lover.

Rose loved Brownlow, and Rose knew that she did so ; but she, too, had her Singleton-inspired misgivings. She would sometimes think it very wrong to love so dangerous a being as Richard gave it to be understood that Brownlow was. As her lover's cloudiness arose when away from her, so did hers when absent from him. His open countenance, his looks of honest love, his clear ringing voice, and kind demeanour, never failed, as soon as

he appeared, to put all Singleton's insinuations to the rout.

Another thing which disturbed the quiet of Rose's mind was that a sensation of dislike to, and dread of, the friend of her childhood was becoming by little and little rooted within her. She began to shudder as he sat beside her—to avoid him whenever he came to the cottage. Singleton could not but perceive this—could not but know who was the stumbling-block in his way—could not but hate Brownlow more violently than ever, resolving that, in the matter of Rose's love, he would never allow “that fellow to walk over him.”

So matters stood as Brownlow's visit drew to a close. Mrs. Adams consulted oft-times with Janet as to whether it would be expedient to ask Brownlow his “intentions;” to get Mr. Small to do so, as a friend of the family; or to let him take his departure, trusting to time to blot out his image from Rose's heart.

Janet gave it as her opinion that if Rose really loved Brownlow, neither time nor absence could ever make her forget him; and so on this point it was hard to make up their minds, mother and daughter daily weighing the *pros* and *cons* to little purpose.

Two days were all that remained of Brownlow's visit to Singleton Hall. He wished to come to an understanding with Rose, and also with Mrs. Adams; and yet his ideas of what was right led him to suppose that a month's acquaintance with them would hardly warrant his doing so.

As he sat at breakfast with Singleton the day before he left, Brownlow said suddenly—

“The Duck at Warton seems a nice sort of place; a good place to come to in the winter for hunting and shooting. Your father's promised me his shooting.”

“Has he?” cried Singleton, darkening.

"Oh, yes! Didn't you know that? I like all this part of the country; just the place to suit me. I think I shall hang out at the Duck; and so make out the winter between that and my own home."

"You won't like the Duck. The cooking's beastly, and the beds are full of bugs."

"I don't believe in the bugs," returned Brownlow, laughing; "and as for the cookery, why appetite's the best sauce: a man's not over delicate after a good day's sport. The Duck's home-brewed is capital! That, and a good steak, or anything plain, is enough for a weary sportsman."

"I hate beer; and steaks are only fit for the dogs. Why don't you pass the winter in Town? I mean to do so."

"That would never do for me. Pavement to walk on; sickly-looking girls to make love to; and prigs to talk to. No, old boy, I've made up my mind to the Duck."

"You'll grow curs'd rusty and quizzical, Master Brownlow, if you bury yourself in the country in that way. What's the good of it? I mean to carry the world before me."

"Well, Singleton, my dear fellow, do as you like! The country's good enough for me."

"Ah! you'll wind up by marrying the dairy-maid, and swamping yourself for life."

Brownlow arose from table, laughed, and shook his head meaningly; Singleton moodily poured out a cup of strong tea; taking up the newspaper as a shield against further conversation.

The manner in which Brownlow had shaken his head and laughed, had stirred up young Singleton's wrath.

"How I *do* hate that fellow!" was a reflection he made unto himself behind the newspaper. Mechanically reading it, he proceeded to decide that he would that very day go

and propose to Mrs. Adams for Rose. He entertained some doubts as to whether Rose herself would accept him.

"And then as to marrying her," he thought, "there will be no need of that. I can make myself disagreeable to her; make very violent love to Miss Janet; cause Rose to resent it; be offended at her conduct, and break it all off. There are plenty of means. Any way, *that* fellow shan't walk over me."

Singleton angrily stirred his tea, glowering at unconscious Brownlow as he did so; and fuming with rage and envious hatred at the smiling expression of that worthy fellow's face.

"I shall just go over to Warton, Singleton, and be back time enough to 'tool the drag' with you. It'll be our last drive for some time; and I fancy you'll be strong enough to take the ribands yourself to-day: what do you think of it?"

"I shan't have the drag out to-day," replied Singleton to his friend. "I shall ride, most likely."

"I'll go with you, then. What time do you start?"

"I don't know. Look here! you go your way, and I'll go mine; and then we shan't be a clog on each other's movements. I'm going to the stables."

"Then I'll be off to Warton. Farewell!"

Dr. Johnson was wont to say that he loved a "good hater." The worthy ponderosity might as well have said that he loved a "good fiend." He would have worshipped Singleton, so awfully was that black and hellish passion strengthening within him, and so complacently did he foster and give way to it.

Richard stalked gloomily about his stables, wherein dwelt the six nags which the *nonchalant* indulgence of the Nabob allowed him to keep. The sight of his stud gave him no pleasure on that sunshiny morning. He bit his nails;



thought of Brownlow; pettishly quarrelled with his head groom; and maliciously kicked the good-tempered Newfoundland pet of the stable-yard, as it bounded up to him wagging its tail in salutation. Singleton's heart did not smite him as the good old dog retreated, crest-fallen, to his box, with an air of meek reproach. He did not behold a stable-boy, fiery red with wrath, shaking his fist at his back; neither did he hear the epithet of "sneak" bestowed upon him by the Nabob's fat, rubicund coachman.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE OLD ABBEY.

ON the top of a gentle rise stood the gray ruins of an old Abbey; daws cheerily cawed and sailed in and out of the gateway tower; whilst sheep with tinkling bells grazed around, and the sound of threshing in a neighbouring barn pleasantly smote the ear.

Rose Adams sat beneath a tall tree, which sprang up and widely spread within the ruined chapel, through the lofty and beautiful altar-window of which the deep blue sky was visible. A robin, perched on the stone framework, loudly sang, the ivy rustling an accompaniment to his ditty.

The seat on which Rose sat was the headless body, moss-grown and weather-stained, of St. Peter, the patron saint of the Abbey.

Owing to his flowing drapery, the country people called him "the image of the old 'ooman with the keys;" they ruthlessly carved letters on the fallen gigantic statue, or idly chipped the stone. Pic-nics were held in the desecrated ruin: whilst senseless jokes and ignorant banter on

its former dwellers, mouldering beneath the cloister pavement, burst with laughter long and loud from festive pic-nic parties.

Meanwhile, Brownlow reached Mrs. Adams' well-known cot. No Rose was there. Poor Brownlow! He soon took leave of Mrs. Adams and Janet; asking the maid of the whereabouts of "Miss Rose."

Now this maid opined Brownlow to be "such a sweet-spoken young gentleman;" moreover, she was "sartin sure" there was "something" between him and Rose; ever hoping that "*it might be*," and that her young mistress would never prefer "that blackamoor thing, Mr. Singleton, nor yet that fat cherubim, Mr. Evelyn, to such a gentleman as young Mr. Brownlow." This maid, therefore, felt great delight at being able to tell her inquirer that "Miss Rose had taken her book and gone to sit and read nigh the ruins of the *ole* Abbey."

No sooner had Brownlow heard her words, than he sprang off eagerly towards this "*ole* Abbey."

The pure white of Rose's garment shining, as it were, among the gray tint of all around, discovered her to Brownlow. He was soon seated on the ground beside her: both remaining silent awhile: he with his eyes fixed on her; she with hers bent on the few encaustic tiles yet remaining of the chapel pavement.

"I'm come to take leave of you. I'm going to-morrow!" said Brownlow with a sigh.

Rose made no answer. She looked at him for an instant; reddened, turned pale, looked away; her eyes filling with tears, and her lip trembling.

Brownlow, enchanted, yet grieved at what he beheld, quickly added that he meant to return to Warton for the hunting season; though Singleton had painted him a dreadful picture of the Duck. On hearing these words,

Rose sighed deeply, as though a great weight had been taken off her mind ; a sweet smile overspread her pale face as she looked towards her lover.

The moments were swiftly and softly flying, when Rose suddenly sprang up at the thought that Mrs. Adams would most certainly not approve of her child sitting *tête-à-tête* with Brownlow in that pleasant solitude. Duty spoke, and poor Rose obeyed.

“Good-by, Mr. Brownlow ! I must go home,” she said in faltering tones.

Brownlow insisted on escorting her thither. They left the ruined, majestic, desecrated chapel together ; their way lying through what had once been a lofty, wide, and vaulted corridor, but which, unroofed and choked up with ruins, thorns, and nettles, was now but a narrow grass-grown path. The noon-day sun was fiercely shining down upon this path ; gnats and flies briskly darting about, and buzzing in his rays, which were sent back blazing with heat by the craggy wall they struck upon.

The two lovers followed the path in silence, being full of thoughts which found no utterance. A faint scream from Rose aroused Brownlow, who followed her. She started back ; he, catching her in his arms, as he might have caught a child, raised her from the ground, saving her from a viper, which, half uncoiled, bore his shining head aloft, loudly hissing, as he fixed his gleaming eyes on the disturbers of his slumber. One more step, and Rose’s foot would have been upon him ! Brownlow, tightly clasping his light burthen, stamped his iron heel on the viper’s head, grinding it into the earth, whilst the reptile in his agony wound himself around his destroyer’s leg. In that moment Brownlow forgot the prudent resolve he had made not to declare himself to Rose until she should have seen and known more of him. With his foot still firmly pressed

on the snake's crushed head, he clasped her to his breast ; kissed her burning cheek ; stammered out that he loved her ; asking her to be his wife. Rose, frightened, agitated, trembling in Brownlow's arms, found no words wherewith to reply to him. Her little hand timidly pressed his wide shoulder, and a loving smile spread itself from her lips to her eyes.

"You mean 'Yes,' Rose?" cried Brownlow.

"Yes!"

Rose was replaced on the path ; Brownlow unwound the viper from his leg ; held it up in triumph, and then sent it flying in the air, to go to decay among a heap of ruins.

Thus was brought about, and thus was settled in a minute, a most important event in the life of these two happy and fond young lovers.

As Brownlow and Rose left the narrow path, they turned into the remains of the great hall of the Abbey, where kings and mighty lords, bishops and poor travellers, had been entertained ; wherein now the bramble and briar flourished, and the ivy clung about the well-proportioned arch of the high doorway.

Slowly they left the ruin, and slowly, very slowly they sauntered, taking the longest road towards Rose's home ; lingering in the cool shade of green lanes, and talking in subdued tones and few words of their present and future happiness.

On arriving at the cottage, Rose found Janet indulging in the lady's hard work called "gardening."

She, too, on that fine sunshiny day had indulged in dreams of love. Richard was expected by her every minute. He had promised to bring certain poems, which were ere long to appear before the public ; and which he and Janet were to look over together.

Janet, although she could hardly believe such happiness

to be possible, yet felt no doubt that Richard loved her ; and as she worked in the fragrant garden, breathing the balmy air and the rich perfume of flowers, she pictured to herself a happy life to be passed with Singleton, when she should be his wife ; when he, freed from his faults, should owe his happiness to her ; whilst the whole world should do justice to his superior mind and talents.

From time to time she raised her head and listened, as in the distance she heard the sound of horses' hoofs ; expecting as each horseman drew near that it was Richard. Horseman after horseman passed by ; Janet resuming her work and her meditations, assuring herself that Richard would come in the afternoon. Rose stood beside her sister, yet Janet perceived her not, so taken up was she with her newly found happiness.

Rose gently touched her shoulder. Janet, starting into this world from the far-off world of imagination in which she had been roaming, smiled fondly on Rose, on seeing the beaming look of joy and happiness spread over her sister's face.

Rose and Janet were soon seated hand-in-hand beneath the plane-tree, under whose shadow they had so often played in childhood ; and there Rose poured into Janet's ear the history of the last hour. Janet listened with delight to her sister's story, saying, as Rose came to the end of it for the third time—

“ You see, dear Rose, that Richard was mistaken in what he said ; and his words misled mamma. How strange it is that such a clever man as he is should not see clearer ! ”

The next step of the two fond sisters was to make Mrs. Adams partaker of their happiness.

Janet was spokeswoman, whilst Rose, leaning her head on her mother's shoulder, gently pressed her hand and kissed her cheek.

Mrs. Adams' first feeling was joy at her daughter's happiness ; but anon a chill came over her spirit at the idea of losing her darling Rose. She, however, suffered joy alone to appear ; but when her children were again seated beneath the plane-tree to talk of Rose's happiness, she sought her own room, there to weep unseen ; and having so wept, to compose her mind, and to render thanks to Heaven for having so bounteously provided for her child.

Brownlow, overflowing with joy, took his way towards Singleton Hall, not far from which he met Richard trotting along on his well-groomed horse, on his way to "do for *that fellow*," by proposing to Mrs. Adams for Rose. Singleton deemed that she would not be so mad as to refuse *him*, and throw away such a chance of promoting her daughter to matrimony and to wealth.

He drew up on meeting Brownlow ; who, putting forth his hand, gaily cried—

"Singleton, my dear old boy, shake hands and wish me joy ! She's promised to be mine ; and there isn't a happier dog under heaven than I am !"

Richard coldly gave his *hand* ; reddened, frowned, and said—

"*She !* Who's she ? I can't make it out."

"Rose Adams, to be sure. What do you think of that ? Mrs. Adams has consented. My dear fellow, fall in love as soon as you can, and engage yourself as I've done. You can't think how happy and gay it would make you. Just the thing you want : cheer you up wonderfully, it would."

"It's all nonsense !" returned Singleton, peevishly ; which caused Brownlow to laugh heartily as he replied—

"Just try it, my man, before you say that. Ah ! *you* don't know what it is to love, and to be loved by a charming girl ! Oh ! by the by, if you're going to the cottage, it

would be just as well to say nothing about it: Rose might not like it."

"Don't alarm yourself; I'm not going there. I'm growing mons'ous sick and tired of them."

Brownlow laughed again as he let go his friend's rein, and departed.

With what feelings of rage, mortification, and revenge, Singleton, after a short ride, slowly retraced his way. To have been forestalled and "walked over" by Brownlow; to have been so little valued by Rose, after all his insidious love-making! Here was matter enough to drive a vain, selfish, and self-ignorant man mad with torment of soul.

Like all vain, selfish, and self-ignorant people, young Singleton could see no fault in *himself*; and, wretched being, he had no one on earth, save Janet, gently to probe his mind; to discover its diseases, and to point out their proper remedies. He was himself quite unequal to this task; besides which, he considered his mind to be in a perfectly normal state; for although Janet's words had now and then led him to a little reflection on himself, he laid them not to heart. As he rode along he cursed Brownlow and Rose, longing for some opportunity to be revenged on them for the supposed wrongs he had received at their hands. It never struck Singleton that, in order to please himself and to flatter his vanity, he would have had Rose and trusty Brownlow miserable for life. Richard had more bitterness to swallow before forgetting his cares in sleep.

The nabob dined out: young Singleton being forbidden to do so by Mr. Blenkins until his health should be thoroughly mended, had ordered a good dinner, composed of all *his* favourite dishes: at which dinner he had intended thoroughly to have enjoyed himself; not only by means of the dainty fare he loved, but, moreover, in triumphing over

Brownlow, on account of the victory he had intended to have gained, in carrying off Rose Adams before his eyes.

Poor Singleton ! how differently the dinner turned out from what he had intended ! There was no triumph for him ; and he was fain to gag Brownlow by keeping Mr. Rumley and the footmen in the room, watching him and his guest as they fed. Brownlow's spirits found vent in lively sallies and merry ideas, all tending to increase Singleton's gloom and irritability.

Dessert being placed on the table, and Mr. Rumley and his subalterns having retired, "Now then, Singleton, my good old fellow !" quoth Brownlow, rubbing his hands, and beaming with delight, "let's have a bumper of port to Rose's health ; and then another to propitiate the gods, more especially Cupid, in order that you may soon go splash over head and ears in love, and carry off your charmer as I have done."

"Rose's health !" said Singleton moodily ; then slowly draining his glass, he added, "as for your other toast, I shan't drink it : I've no wish to saddle myself with a wife ; they're more plague than profit."

"My dear Singleton, a man's only half a man till he's married !"

"You mean a man's a man *till* he's married !"

"Not a bit of it ! Ah, you'll change your opinion when you come to see Rose and me ; when you see us happy and comfortable, with lots of little ones about us ; and——"

"I hate children !" interrupted Singleton, filling his glass.

"Do you ? I hope to have a dozen, at least."

"They'll soon plague you to death ; and they must be so devilishly expensive to keep : cut one out of all one's pleasures."

"What can a man do better with his money than spend it on his family ? Besides, I've plenty of it, old boy !"



"But Rose hasn't a rap!"

"What does that signify? I've enough for both. When there's money on one side, there's no need of it on the other."

"I think you might have done better."

"Done better? How can a fellow do better than treat himself to a pretty, gentle creature for a wife; settle down in his own place; give children to his country, and do as much good as ever he can."

"*Settle?* Don't you know what Rochester said to the little dog that bit him? 'Ah, d—n you! I wish you were married and settled in the country.'"

"Ha! ha! ha! Capital! Very good! It's witty enough; but in real life it don't do to follow the maxims of such rakish fellows as Rochester, unless one wishes to lose health and reputation in this world, and one's soul in the next."

"Needles and pins,  
Needles and pins,  
When a man marries  
His trouble begins,"

sang Singleton huskily.

"Here's success to 'needles and pins.' Come, a bumper. You're a cup too low, Singleton. You see everything through a gray mist this evening. Cheer up, and be merry."

This was too much for Singleton. "I've such an infernal headache," he cried, choking with anger. "I shall leave you and go to bed. May Heaven confound it all!" he added, between his teeth, as he darted from the room, leaving Brownlow to sigh over him awhile, but soon to forget him in thoughts of gentle Rose and future happiness.

As for Singleton, he paced his room until from rage he

subsided into gloom; which begetting poetic fancies, he passed half the night in pitying himself in metre, filling several sheets of foolscap with his woes: bemoaning the coldness of the world, the carelessness of the human race, the withered blight neglect had brought upon his heart, the little pains mankind took to understand him, concluding with dark hints which seemed to point towards madness, and death from "my own, my fever'd hand."

These lucubrations having appeared in a magazine, many a one of the softer sex sighed over them; thought what an "interesting, exquisite creature" the writer must needs be; how crushed, blighted, and misunderstood he was; whilst others longed to see him, to be the angel who should bring balm to his wounded spirit, to live for him, to understand him, to console him. Charitable and gentle thoughts; but *what* a life would any woman have led with crossgrained, ungoverned Richard Singleton!

For a fortnight after quitting Singleton Hall, Brownlow abode at the Duck at Warton, a snug inn, with all the solid comfort such places contained in the old posting, coaching days. During this fortnight, however, the greater part of his time was passed at Mrs. Adams'. It was then that Truth hopped out of her well, and, holding up her glass to Mrs. Adams' view, caused her therein to see that Singleton, by his hints and dark words, had woefully belied honest, honourable, loving Brownlow. Recollecting the dark little gentleman's character when a child, she sighed and shook her head to think how all her plans and anxiety had been thrown away on him. She could plainly see the envy and selfishness which had set him on to undermine his friend; how the childish feelings which made him cry out, "You're nasty things and I hate you," had grown within him; more hidden than of yore, though not the less strong and dangerous for being concealed.

"Heaven be praised that Rose did not love Richard, my dear!" quoth Mrs. Adams, after unburthening her mind to Janet.

Janet blushed, turning away towards the window, as she said, "I am sure, mamma, you do not understand Richard. There is so much good in him, it only requires to be properly brought out. I am afraid he is not understood or appreciated by most people as he ought to be."

Mrs. Adams smiled, but said nothing.

Singleton, foiled in his schemes concerning Rose, and unwilling to show the least symptom of defeat, called on the Adams' as often, and paid as long visits as of yore. Now, however, Janet was the object of all his attention. To her it was no hard task to listen over and over again to his poems; to hear his opinion on his alterations. With fond admiration she lent ear to him as he read; stopping him ever and anon, as for the hundredth time he gave forth her favourite passages.

How she treasured every line; the offspring of Singleton's morbid brain! She repeated his words with tender emphasis when alone; pitying the sensibility of his soul, and loving him the more, the more she saw of the wounded state of his mind. Janet suspected not that all the morbid sensibility which so affected her charitable heart, arose from overgrown, and yet growing, envy and vanity.

No! she felt certain that Richard was far above the sphere into which he was thrown; that none about him could appreciate his mind and talents; that he craved for genial spirits, which he met not; and that it was therefore quite natural that he should at times be melancholy and irritable.

Richard was not blind to Janet's pure, honest, and admiring love for him. He half despised so easy a conquest—the conquest of "poor Janet Adams;" yet his vanity

was gratified by it; and he took an unmanly delight in "casting his glamour o'er her;" in marking how, from the kind and unembarrassed friend of his childhood, she became gradually less free in his presence, blushing deeply when he appeared, and trembling when he held her hand in his.

Janet had never felt so happy. Richard's supposed love for her, and her true love for him, together with the happiness of Rose and Brownlow, and Mrs. Adams' calm felicity, made life bright and merry to poor Janet.

Soon after Brownlow's departure, Matthew Lund arrived at Drayton Court on a visit to young Fotheringay. It is not to be supposed that Lund neglected to pay his court to Singleton, and to become acquainted with the nabob, his dinners, and the contents of his purse at cards.

Lund had given up all thoughts of the Church; he opined that his talents called him to another destiny.

"The Church is slow as slow can be!" he told himself. "Suppose I get an average living of from three to four hundred a year and a house, in some remote corner of England; marry, have a regiment of children; obliged to go about among the poor people, and sport benevolent with soup and humbug; live a parson's life, which is generally a pretty long one—fifty years, perhaps, rusting away in the same place, without an atom of fun or excitement: what a throw away it would be! Now, with my supple mind, my little talents at cards and billiards, and the fifty pounds a year the old gentleman allows me, I flatter myself I shall get on better than by investing in gown and bands. Fotheringay, Brownlow, and Singleton will be fine stepping-stones to polite life. Between the three I can manage to get boarded and lodged a good part of the year; card money will dress me: for as I shall play as a matter of business, and not for pleasure or excitement, I shall keep cool, and know when to stop. Then, ten to one I shall find some

ugly girl with a heap of cash who won't be above marrying me ; I'll make love to her and win her as a wind-up. Devilish deal better than boring one's self to death as a parson ; so my mind's made up, and may good fortune wait on me ! ”

Lund had fixed upon Singleton as husband to one of his sisters, and on Brownlow as spouse to another. As for Fotheringay, he knew full well that to catch him for a brother-in-law was impossible ; so he gave that idea up the moment after he had entertained it.

On hearing from Singleton of Brownlow's intended marriage with Rose Adams, Lund felt foiled and vexed. He made the best of a bad job, however ; gaining ground with Richard by laughing heartily at that young gentleman's wit, exerted at the expense of Brownlow and his love-match with the “ she-dominie.” So the disappointed youth was pleased to call fresh, innocent Rose, the true friend of his childhood ; but who had of late piqued and irritated him by looking so scared and cold as he sat beside her ; as well as by visibly avoiding his snake-like love-making.

Every moment that Lund could spare from Fotheringay was given to young Singleton. Lund was not the man to propose anything ; he was always on the *qui vive*, ready and apparently willing to fall into the proposals and plans of others : except in his own home, however ; *there* he stood at ease, and gave himself airs.

Lund perceived that author-craft was now Singleton's hobby ; wherefore Lund became his attentive listener ; giving ear for hours to all the rhapsodies which flowed from the poet's brain. He allowed himself to appear as astonished at Singleton's “ towering genius ” as he had formerly seemed to be at his supposed prowess in fighting, driving, and drinking.

Richard would tire him to death, fidgeting about altera-

tions in words and phrases ; Mat ever voted for Singleton's last idea on the subject, vowing *that* was the very thing ; and bearing in mind the Bishop and Gil Blas, he never ventured to criticise, even when most pressed to do so.

Lund met with his reward. He dined frequently at Mr. Singleton's well-served table ; he won the nabob's carelessly-parted with gold ; he cut out Mahomet at the sandal-wood chess-board : Mr. Singleton feeling an approach to a gleam of pleasure when Lund suffered himself to be beaten ; bringing his defeat about as skilfully as others might have done a victory.

Young Singleton considered that Mat's advice was most necessary to him in his poetic labours. Poor poet ! he did not perceive that Lund never gave him the least advice ; that he merely listened, as Singleton, puffed up with self-admiration, complacently read ; agreeing with him on all points. This Richard called " Lund's very valuable advice." Mat went so far as to show his dupe a copy of tolerable verses in heroic metre, written by a deceased brother of Lund's, and which he pretended were his own composition ; asking Singleton his candid opinion of them, and begging him to tell him sincerely and honestly whether he would advise him " to devote himself to the muses " or not.

" My dear Lund," replied Singleton, overflowing with delight, " I should not be a true friend to you if I said ' Go on ! ' These verses are but average compositions at the best. At the risk of hurting your feelings, my dear fellow, I *must* throw cold water on your performance. Try your hand at prose, and let me see that. I really am very sorry to be so hard upon you ; but you wished for the truth."

Lund took up the manuscript ; putting it in his pocket with a well-feigned crestfallen air ; sighing, he said—

" Thank you, Singleton. It's hard to bear ; but I dare

say you've saved me from a great deal of misery from disappointed hopes, and so forth. The fact is, you fired me, you see. Ah! what delight it must be to be born with such talent and genius as yours! If one's not born with poetic genius, I suppose one can never hope to get it by practice. Thank you—thank you! I must forget *my* failure in *your* success."

"You're a good fellow, Lund," said Singleton, chuckling complacently, and looking at himself in the glass; "I'm happy to have such a friend and adviser!"

"And you," quoth Lund to himself, nibbling his nails, "are a blind puppy; and I'm happy to have such a dupe and patron."

When the time came for the nabob's yearly visit to London, young Singleton repaired thither likewise for the first time in his life, full of expectation, hope, and castle-building.

Janet could scarcely keep in her tears when Singleton bade her adieu. Her mother and sister were in Warton; she and Richard were alone. Heartless Richard was tender; Janet was sad. Richard promised to send her a copy of his poems as soon as they should appear; whispered—"You will think of me sometimes, Janet?" fervently pressed her hand, and left her full of affection for him; full of fond and deluding hope.

As Singleton was about to bring out his volume of poems, he deemed it necessary that Lund should be with him to "watch it through the press;" in fact, to sit by whilst *he* corrected the press; to listen for the twentieth time to the author's pet bits; to go over all the old ground as to altering and amending; skilfully to flatter; to talk of *the* book from morning till night; and to give neither sound nor sign of gaping.

There are men who will do anything "for a consideration."

Lund, being one of these, thought it quite worth his while to undergo all the dull, heavy work of "watching the poems through the press," seeing that the reward would be living with Singleton at free quarters, and being introduced into society in London.

Lund's heart skipped with delight; but he thought fit to hang back a little before closing with his friend's offer.

"My dear Singleton," he said, demurely, "I should be delighted to be with you, and to watch your charming poems through the press; but, you see—that—you can feel, I am sure—you know why—my father would not be able—in fact—the truth is—I couldn't afford it; it would not be right."

"Nonsense, man! Why it wouldn't cost you more than living here. You *must* come, for I can't do without you."

Lund sighed and shrugged his shoulders as he replied—

"I can't. Lodgings are dear, and everything else in proportion. Besides—"

"Lodgings, pooh! I mean you to be with me; for I shall want you every minute. I shan't be with my father; I'm to have rooms in Bond-Street, not far from my publisher's. If you don't consent I shall be offended."

"My dear Singleton, what a fine, warm-hearted, generous, talented fellow you are! How can I refuse you?" cried Lund, seizing and wringing both Richard's hands; then turning away and blowing his nose violently. Singleton really thought himself to be all that his toady had said; likewise believing that Lund was greatly overcome by his feelings.



## CHAPTER XII.

## ALMERIA.

SINGLETON'S first care on arriving in town, was to rush to Hill-street, to call on the Fotheringays. Before the door stood the "Dasher's" well-known high phaeton and gray "prads." Two grooms on grays were there, ready to ride after her ladyship; whilst another stood at the head of her horses; and street loungers hung about to see her come out.

In the hall, Singleton met the woman of spirit, followed by meek Sir Theophilus. She was habited in a box-coat of white cashmere, trimmed with red, and having much the appearance of livery. Her black Brutus was topped by a white beaver; a large muslin cravat was rolled about her throat, and drawn over her chin. Her dark eyes gleamed fiercely from beneath her hat, their gleam heightened by the rouge wherewith her cheeks were loaded.

"Ah, Singleton, man!" she cried. "How do? You'll find Merry upstairs. My boy's out; Heaven knows where—I don't. Come, Sir Thof," and so she stepped forth, standing for an instant before the door to see that her turn-out was all right. Sir Theophilus debonnairely inquired after Mr. Singleton's health, and whereabouts.

"Now, Sir Thof, I'm ready; the horses won't stand," cried a loud, harsh voice, and presently off dashed my Lady Fotheringay, sitting bolt upright on her high driving-seat, her legs stretched out in proper "whip's" attitude; her little, fragile-looking, powdered husband at her side, and Pepper, her white terrier, at her feet.

Singleton, with beating heart, was ushered into the presence of Almeria, who no longer received him as a "boy," but as a man. He, enchanted at his reception,

and more dazzled than ever by her beauty, failed not to make himself agreeable after his mode; and Almeria, to whom homage was homage, let it come from whom it might, failed not to encourage him after her mode.

In the midst of Singleton's most insinuating, languishing airs, a door opposite to that by which he had entered was slowly and softly opened. Almeria blushed. He turned sharply round to catch the object on which her eyes were fixed. He only beheld the door gently closing; then turning as sharply towards the young lady as he had done towards the door; he found her intent on the obese Cupid she was painting on a card-rack.

"Who was it?" asked Singleton, huskily.

"My maid, with the ball-dress she is making for me. Are *you* going to the Russells'?"

Singleton made no reply. It was very well for Almeria to look unconcerned and talk about maids and ball-dresses; but girls do not blush about such things, and he felt convinced that "that fool" Septimus Barnett had opened the door and shut it again so cautiously, and that both that divine and Miss Fotheringay were only waiting for his departure to meet, whilst the "Dasher" was "tooling" about Bond Street.

"Shall you be there?" inquired Almeria again. "Mamma can take you, if you don't know them. Why don't you answer? What's the matter?"

"Good morning, Miss Fotheringay. Pray, don't let me disturb you!" So saying, Singleton darted from the room, burning with rage and jealousy, his eyes moist and his hands trembling.

Singleton, after tearing wildly twice round Berkeley Square, rushed back to Hill Street, and darted into the presence of Almeria as unexpectedly as he had darted out of it. During his two courses round the square he had

reflected that maybe Almeria might, after all, have told him the truth, and that perhaps it might so happen that he had acted foolishly. His peace was soon made: it was arranged that the "Dasher" should take him to the Russells' ball, where he was to behold the ball-dress, supposed cause of his late woe. Singleton, having vehemently kissed Almeria's hand, left the room by one door, whilst through the other entered the Rev. Septimus Barnett on tiptoe, who, without a word, threw a three-cornered note into Almeria's colour-box, kissed his hand to her, and vanished.

"Lund!" cried Singleton, on arriving home, "have you been to the publisher's? What news of the poems?"

"Look here!" With these words Lund spread proof-sheets before the enraptured author.

Singleton, delighted, looked them over. There were his very thoughts—his very words in print; and there was his name, too, on the title-page—"Poems, by Richard Singleton, Esq."

"I say, Lund, how well it looks, don't it? We'll look them over after dinner. I must just go and see how my father is. You can read them through, though, till I come back, and see if anything strikes you by way of alteration, and let me know."

The proof-sheets were not looked at after dinner.

Singleton and Lund dined *tête-à-tête*. Singleton, in the double joy of seeing himself in print, and well looked on, as he supposed, by Almeria, committed the error of taking a little too much port; which "opened his heart," as the process is called, so leading him into the mistake of confiding to Lund his intense love for Miss Fotheringay. Lund had seen enough to be aware how matters stood between Almeria and the tutor, wherefore he listened as complaisantly to Singleton's outpourings of love as he did to his outpourings of poetry; sending him to bed, at a

late hour, feeling "blessed as the immortal gods," in the persuasion that he was about to become *the* poet of the day, that Almeria adored him, and that Lund was ready to go through fire and water for him.

Lund himself crept into bed with a cool head and a cold nose, congratulating himself on being in London at another man's expense, determined never to thwart Singleton, not even in his passion for Almeria.

"He's sure to be disappointed there—*she'll* never have him. When he's smarting at her loss, *then* will be the time to throw in my sister Theresa. I wish she had a better name! We must get one up for the occasion, the fellow's so cursed romantic."

Then with a gape Mr. Lund turned on the other side, and fell asleep just as the watchman was quavering out, "Past two o'clock and a stormy morning."

In due course the poems, having been "watched through the press" by Singleton and Lund, made their appearance before the public, to the author's infinite delight and satisfaction. The public received them very graciously; more especially the ladies, young, middle-aged, and old; Singleton, thanks to them, soon became a lion, in the society of which, through the Fotheringays, he was a member.

The poet had caused several copies of his work to be dressed in morocco suits, red, yellow, green, purple, and blue, well bedecked with gilding. These he presented to various persons of his acquaintance. To Almeria one was of course given, splendid in sky-blue and gold, lined with white watered silk. The writer insinuated, as she graciously received it, that *she* had inspired all the tender sentiments contained in the poems.

To Janet, likewise, the promised copy was sent by the author. Almeria looked carelessly over her splendid volume, allowing it to lie on her table as an ornament. Janet

devoured every well-known word contained in hers ; treasured the book with tender reverence ; never suffering a day to pass without feasting her gentle heart on its contents.

Mr. Singleton gaped over his son's splendidly bound outpourings of soul ; informing him that he thought the outside the best part of the work ; and that he much marvelled how Richard could write such twaddle, or how he could find any one to read it.

Young Singleton was angry, but not cast down by his parent's observations. He looked upon him to be a Goth ; and consoled himself with the buzz of approbation, and the waving of feathers on female heads, which ever greeted his arrival at routs and assemblies.

Singleton was generally accompanied to routs by his friend Lund ; who, after paying his devoirs to the lady of the house, was wont to sit himself down to whist and the fleecing of dowagers—a proceeding which greatly recommended him to his patron, as he did not in any way clash with Singleton, or give him cause for envy.

London and its society were well suited to Singleton's taste. He there found no manly sports to raise his discontent and emulation. Fotheringay, however, would at times banter him on his present mode of life ; Fotheringay being entirely given up to the "Fancy" and the turf. He drove "plucky Tim," the "Irish Slasher," about in his buggy ; never feeling so much at home as with "Jocks," dealers, and "bruisers ;" growing by degrees shy in the society of ladies. He delighted in midnight orgies with low people ; the "flooring of Charlies," tantamount to the modern wrenching off of knockers ; generally winding up with a night in the watch-house, tantamount to the modern police-station.

Singleton began to find out that ladies' society was much more genial to his turn of mind than the company of men.

The fair sex, for the most part, admired his talents; treated him gently; flattered him; received his homage kindly: there was no rivalry between him and them; and consequently no envy, anger, or hatred towards them on his part. His earnest wish now became to make every woman he came near in love with him; out of sheer vanity, and that restless desire of shining which was a curse unto him.

Singleton's tactics varied according to the character of the woman he wished to enthrall. With some he was passionate, and frantically tremulous; with others unhappy, sighing, suppressed, and melancholy; whilst with some he affected a desponding timidity, standing remote with languid looks fixed upon his prey, to be removed with a slight start when he caught the eye of the prey aforesaid. With all he was poetic and misunderstood, wretched and desponding.

The lively, airy portion of the fair ones stood young Singleton's attacks without the least chance of conquest on his part. It was with the passionate, the sentimental, and the romantic that he succeeded; and truly with them his success was great. By the end of his first season among the beau-monde, the ladies were all, more or less, at daggers drawn, and in the spirit of hatred against each other. He, with vast complacency, included them all under the epithet of "poor creatures," as he boasted of his doings to Lund; to whom he confided that his heart was still Almeria's, and that hers it would be until death.

Almeria decidedly belonged to the lively and airy division of womankind, she being the only one of the said division who so much as tolerated young Singleton. Her conduct towards him was, however, somewhat uneven; sometimes cold, at others encouraging; now kind, and then petulant. This served but to fan the flame her beauty had kindled, and kept burning within him.

As Almeria had many admirers besides Septimus Barnett,

these men all became to Singleton "nasty things that he hated," in consequence of the fears and jealousies they aroused in his breast. He ardently longed to make her his; but he well knew that he must have his father's consent to such a step, as he was entirely dependent on the nabob. The famous poet, the admired of the fair sex, stood in such awe of his parent, feeling such a nervous tremor when in his presence, that he knew not how to make his petition: it was even worse than inquiring concerning his mother.

Young Singleton in his distress consulted Lund.

Now, this step of his patron's did not at all suit Mat's ideas. He would not have objected if Richard had determined to address himself to Almeria in person, because he felt sure she would refuse him; but he feared that Mr. Singleton might smile on the match, get it up with the "Dasher" (Sir Theophilus went for nothing), and so marry his son to her daughter; to the downfall of Lund's plans concerning the providing himself with a rich brother-in-law for future use.

"My advice to you, my dear Singleton, and I advise you as I would my own brother, is to speak to your charmer yourself. Women hate to be proposed to through a third party: they like a nice little scene; just the sort of thing you would get up so well, with all your talent, backed by so much love." So spake Lund.

"Ah! but then you see I'm dependent on my father—I don't dare offend him; and I can't tell how it is, he has such a devil of a hold on me, I'm not myself when he is by."

"Well, but look here! If you get Miss Fotheringay's consent, the thing is half done—don't you see?"

"How?"

"Why, even if your father runs rusty, you've got her word—you've secured *her*. Mr. Singleton's consent would

be an after consideration. Besides, supposing he held out, and persevered in not giving it; you have only to wait patiently a bit, with a lovely girl to make love to, and your father's death would set you free."

"My father's death?"

"My dear Singleton, far be it from me to wish to hurt your feelings; but your exquisite sense *must* tell you that Mr. Singleton's health is, alas! such that we cannot hope to have him long among us. He's very much altered, both in looks and spirits, since we have been in town."

Singleton had never thought on his father's death; or, indeed, on any death. He mused awhile on that, and on other matter; then, looking up, he said—

"Lund, your advice is good—I shall act upon it; and get Sir Theophilus or Lady Fotheringay to speak to my father."

"A very good idea. I wish you success, my dear Singleton, with all my heart: *that* I do! How small Brownlow will look, when he sees what a fine girl with a large fortune you've hooked! Very different from Miss Rosey-Posey, with her silly smile, and her two-pence a year paid quarterly!"

At these words Singleton drew himself up, and smiled patronisingly; yet there crept a black shade over his spirit at the recollection that "that fellow" had been beforehand with him; had carried Rose off; and that moreover he was supremely happy, quite independent of and without any reference to Richard Singleton.

In pursuance of Lund's advice, his young patron seized the very first opportunity of declaring himself to Almeria. With vast pathos and much passion he told her that he adored her; that if she refused him his whole life would be blighted; that by so doing she would drive him from the world, and render his existence one long and dreary blank.



Almeria sighed; Almeria played the coquette; but Almeria promised Singleton to be his. He, half mad with joy, threw himself into a chair, hiding his face in his hands, to recover his scattered senses. He did not see the pink and white countenance of the Rev. Septimus Barnett look in at the half-opened door; neither did he perceive an interchange of smiles and nods between his Almeria and that blooming ecclesiastic; after the performance of which the head of Septimus was withdrawn, and the door gently shut. Singleton was not aware that the room next to that in which he had made his tender avowal was inhabited by Tommy and his tutor, who there indoctrinated the little gentleman; putting him through his classical and other studies; and keeping watch on the "Dasher's" movements, with a view to stolen interviews with his beloved.

Lund, who was aware that Singleton had started with mind made up for his declaration, awaited his return with well got up condoling face, and many cut and dried consolations. What, then, were his astonishment, rage, and vexation when Singleton dashed into the room, and, half breathless with excitement and delight, recounted his successful wooing.

Luckily Singleton talked so much and so fast that he did not notice Lund's gasping confusion. He was thus enabled to put on the cloak of hearty, friendly pleasure at the lover's triumph, to wring his hands, and to swear that he felt nearly as happy as Singleton himself.

"I knew you would be, old fellow, you're such a thorough friend!"

"My dear Singleton, I can't express my feelings, 'pon my soul I can't! I was sure she couldn't resist you, my boy, quite sure of that!—Does your father know anything about it yet?"

"No! I shall go to him after dinner; one feels more

up to the kind of thing then. I shall have time to speak to him before we dress. I've engaged Almeria as my partner. I dare say she's very anxious to know what my father will say."

"No doubt of it," blandly replied poor crest-fallen Lund.

Rendered bold by port, Singleton repaired to the nabob's. He walked as fast as he could; he ran upstairs as hard as he could; he knocked at his father's door as loudly as he could; and he skipped into the room as nimbly as he could; so fearful was he lest any lull might cause his desperate courage to evaporate.

"Don't come into the room as if you had a mad bull after you. You have awoke me suddenly from my nap!"

This greeting did not cheer young Singleton; but by a mighty effort he kept his composure.

"I wished to speak to you on an important matter, sir."

"Make haste, then! I hate important matters."

"Mahomet, sir."

"Well! what of him?"

"He will hear me," said Singleton, lowering his voice.

"Never mind! I've no secrets from him, and I might want him. Go on, for Heaven's sake! you tire me to death!"

Young Singleton felt his temples throb; he could hear the blood singing in his throat; whilst the suffocating heat of the nabob's room gave him an inclination to faint.

"Your consent—sir—to—hem! my marriage with—Miss Fotheringay?" was all he could mutter and stammer.

"Have you got hers?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Have you got her father's!"

"No, sir!"

"Mahomet! my lemonade, and light my hookah! d'ye

hear!—I think you're rash to marry so young; but I suppose you know your own affairs best. Pick up my handkerchief for me."

There was a short silence, which the nabob broke by saying—

"There! you may go now. I'm tired."

"Have I your consent, sir?"

"Settle it all among yourselves," replied the nabob, with one of his long, dreary gapes. "I'll allow you a thousand a year, remember; and now don't bore me about it any more."

The nabob here beginning to smoke his hookah, which looked like a snake in a frilled muslin dressing-gown, his son made his escape, feeling a much greater man when he reached his own abode than he had done in the presence of his father.

Singleton's proposal for Almeria was most graciously received, both by the "Dasher" and Sir Theophilus. Nothing could have happened more opportunely than this step on his part. The very day before he declared his passion to Almeria a great sensation had been created in the Fotheringay mansion, and a vast commotion had taken place in consequence of an announcement made by Master Tommy, to the effect that he had beheld his tutor, the Rev. Septimus Barnett, A.M., kiss his sister, Miss Fotheringay, without any anger having been shown by her at this outrage and insult from the reverend gentleman. Master Tommy stoutly stood to his declaration, in spite of severe cross-examinations from his parents, his brother, and his sister.

"It's quite true, quite!" he said, pressing his little hands together, and speaking very distinctly. "I left the study to get some fresh water for Syntax, and when I came back Mr. Barnett was not in the room; so I tied Syntax's

paper frill round his neck—that one I made in your dressing-room the other day, you know, mamma—and took him into the next room to show Merry how funny he looks in it. There I saw Mr. Barnett give Merry a kiss ; and she did not box his ears as your maid did, mamma, when John the groom kissed her in the garden at Drayton. That's all, except that Mr. Barnett ran off when he saw me, and trod on Syntax, and Syntax bit his calf ; and then Mr. Barnett pulled my ear, and told me I was a confounded young ass. That's all, papa, and every bit *quite* true."

The "Dasher's " first impulse, on hearing this evidence, was to horsewhip the tutor, and then to hand him over to her son, to be forthwith kicked out of the house. Sir Theophilus, when the roaring of the tempest had somewhat subsided, in his soft small voice, gave it as his opinion, that it would be degrading to use "vulgar violence ;" but that he would speak seriously and calmly to the Rev. Septimus, and point out to him the propriety of "sending in his resignation forthwith."

"[Pooh ! " cried young Fotheringay ; "much better give the fellow a kick, and send him spinning. How *could* you fancy a creature, Merry, that hears Tommy his 'hic, hæc, hoc,' rules his copies, and sets his sums ? What a degraded taste you must have, faith ! "

Almeria, who thought silence, in the present case, to be wisdom, went on quietly with her work, and spoke not a word. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes flashed angrily, still she kept silence ; although from time to time she jerked her needle in a manner that savoured neither of meekness nor of innocence.

In the evening Sir Theophilus gave the Rev. Septimus Barnett his *congé*, together with a slight hint, that his "very unclerical conduct on a late occasion" had made some little difference in Sir Theophilus' views, as to his

appointment to "a certain living" when it should become vacant.

The "Dasher" and her boy both declared that the "rascal" was below *their* notice, and that they would not "dirty their hands with him;" which opinion and resolution of theirs had caused the culprit to be left to the more tender mercies of the mild old baronet.

There was great surprise in the family, as well as great delight, when the members thereof heard, on the following day, that Singleton had proposed, and that Almeria had accepted him.

In the evening, just as the lamplighter was lighting up the oil lamps in Hill Street, a hackney-coach jingled up to the door of Sir Theophilus' mansion. Into this conveyance a couple of portmanteaus having been put, the Rev. Septimus Barnett entered, with a somewhat crest-fallen aspect.

From an upper window a pair of beautiful eyes beheld his departure; saw his legs mounting the crazy steps of the coach; saw them disappear among the straw wherewith it was littered; saw the door banged to, a pink and white physiognomy appearing at the carriage window, the crimson lips of which were giving the route to the "jarvey." The "jarvey" having crawled up on his box in his many-caped coat, belaboured his poor nags; who, after an effort or two, conveyed Septimus from the beautiful watching eyes, and their beautiful owner.

No sooner had young Singleton received the consent of Sir Theophilus and her ladyship, than he wrote to Brownlow to relate his good fortune, hoping, in the amiability of his heart, to raise his friend's envy, and to "astonish" him by the brilliant match he was about to make. The only feelings, however, which he did raise in that good manly fellow's breast were unfeigned joy and happiness at his success; Brownlow hoping that the marriage with a

woman whom he loved so well, would be the means of opening Singleton's heart, of correcting his selfishness, and of making him contented, amiable, and happy. He expressed his delight to Richard in a friendly, hearty letter, which was wormwood to Singleton ; who, with all his endeavours, could not trace in it the least touch of envy, nor the least symptom of astonishment.

Brownlow informed him that he and Rose were to be married in the beginning of June, adding, "What do you say, my dear old fellow, to being *turned off* on the same day? Do you think you could arrange it with Miss Fotheringay?"

Singleton asked nothing better. He meant that the grandeur of his wedding should amaze all beholders ; and by being "turned off" on the same day as Brownlow and his bride, he hoped completely to throw them into the shade, and thereby add to his own joy and triumph.

How little he knew of their feelings ! Provided they were made one for life, neither Brownlow nor Rose cared for the splendour of a wedding ceremony ; in short, they thought that the more simple and private it was the better.

Almeria readily agreed to all that young Singleton proposed : she seemed to have no wish but his ; whilst he was in a fever of joy, excitement, and triumph, such as he had never known before.

What were Janet's feelings on hearing of Singleton's intended marriage with the beautiful and brilliant Miss Fotheringay ?

Her heart seemed to turn cold, and to faint within her. The brightness of life seemed turned to darkness ; hope gave place to despair ; joy to sadness ; yet love still reigned over her faithful heart.

Never for one instant did she doubt of Richard's affection for her ; nor dream that he had deceived her. She imagined that the marriage between Singleton and Almeria was a

family arrangement between Sir Theophilus and Mr. Singleton; and whilst she felt that her life was blighted by that brilliant marriage, she never once blamed Richard, nor felt the least ill-feeling towards his bride.

Janet's whole endeavour was to conceal her love and her sorrow from her mother and her sister; suffering them to look upon the sadness which all her efforts could not hide, as sadness produced by the idea of losing her dear Rose.

"It will soon be a sin to love him," Janet oft-times repeated to herself. "Heaven help me, and turn my mind to other thoughts; and may I never allow my grief selfishly to cast a gloom over the happiness of others."

Janet strove by day and by night to drive the remembrance of Richard's treacherous wooing from her thoughts, and to banish all recollection of his words and looks from her mind. She no longer revelled in his volume of poems, her greatest treasure; resolving to destroy it when he should be wedded to Almeria.

She busied herself in all Rose's bridal preparations; feasted her sad eyes on Rose's happy, gentle face; kissed her sister's cheek over and over again, with a fervent inward hope that her darling Rose might never know such agony as she then felt; thanking Heaven with all her soul that it was herself, and not Rose, who was enduring such bitter suffering.

The nabob returned to Singleton Hall in the beginning of May; leaving his son in town with Lund, very busy superintending the building of carriages, the setting of jewels, the framing of marriage settlements, and all the other business rich men go through before their wedding can possibly take place.

These affairs were varied by writing loving epistles in verse to Almeria, who laughed at them.

Lund was, meanwhile, undergoing a long martyrdom;

passing his days in a horrible state of "grin and bear it." He felt that to undermine Almeria was impossible; and that to speak one word concerning her, except in praise, was out of the question. Jeering at marriage in general, and laughing at married men, he found to be a losing game; wherefore poor Mr. Lund was forced to perform the part of a toad under a harrow.

Singleton honoured him by calling him his "right hand man," and his second self; working him unmercifully; talking to him without ceasing of himself, his poems, his Almeria, and his happiness,

Lund's only consolation was, that he was boarded and lodged free of expense; that he had made, and continued to make, money at play; and that Singleton was very bountiful in giving him most handsome presents. "Still," thought Lund, "I can't expect all this to go on after he's married: I can't expect to be on the same footing then that I am now. It is so vexatious, just as I'd got him so well under my thumb. I suppose I must look out for some other fool: there are plenty of them about the world, that's one comfort; the only misfortune is, that one don't pick up such a rich one every day of the year. Well! we shall see; I'll hang on as long as I can, any way."

Lund had spoken justly when he had remarked to Singleton how much the nabob was altered. That rich one of the earth felt it to be so, without daring to own it to himself. He had passed his time in London in the society of other rich East Indians; he being in a totally different set from his son. With his wealthy allies he had played chess and cards; had fed on fiery food; had drank iced drinks; had smoked his hookah; all in suffocating rooms, amidst deadly *ennui*. Now he carried his *ennui* into the country to prey upon him, together with new feelings of infirmity and pain, such as he had never felt before. Each time



that Mr. Blenkins "called," Mr. Singleton intended to consult him as to his sensations ; and each time a nervous panic took possession of him. Words stuck in his throat ; he dared not ask questions he feared to hear answered ; feeling it to be a relief when the doctor departed ; and saying each time, "I will ask him to-morrow ; there's no hurry about it."

The nabob made no alteration in his mode of life : the house was, as usual, full of company ; he gave dinners and gaming parties as of yore ; and went out amongst his rich country neighbours as much as ever. It was remarked by every one how altered he was ; how grievously ill he looked ; and how, at times, he seemed to be suffering from pain, though he confessed it not.

Solitude and a sick chamber would have been disastrous beyond measure to Mr. Singleton. To be alone with his thoughts was to him far greater torture than any bodily agony, however great ; for among those thoughts there was not one to give the faintest glimmer of comfort to his soul : they were black, hideously black and dreadful. Thoughts of crimes were they—crimes committed for the sake of flying pleasures, the very remembrance of which pleasures was but faint and shadowy, whilst the crimes that paved the way to them stood out distinctly in his mind ; the wretchedness and fear their recollection brought to him being far greater and more lasting than the delight of pleasant sins had been. They had ever had some alloy about them, whilst the remembrance of his damning crimes had no mixture to alloy it ; no comfort, no hope ; nought but an uneasy gnawing of conscience, together with a vague and tormenting dread of something which he could not, or, perhaps, *would* not realize.

At times he would talk drawlingly with Mahomet, trying to live over again in memory the days of pleasure for ever

past and gone. It was a sad and fruitless effort, making the dark present darker still by the calling up the ghosts of departed joys, and with them the ghastly array of crime and cruelty by which he had purchased his evil, short-lived happiness.

By degrees society failed to chase away the phantoms by which he was haunted. In the midst of the guests around him, he sat as much alone in spirit as if he had been in the deepest solitude, his eyes cast down or vacantly fixed on space, his soul trembling within him, his body tortured by the pain he felt, yet dared not speak of.

When he was not present his visitors spared him not, pleasantly gossiping concerning him, making the worst of all they saw, spreading abroad as certain matters which some among them might have supposed probable; giving to the world with a "so it is," that which was laid before them with a "perhaps."

On backbiting, self-glorification will generally be found to be built up. "My neighbour is an extravagant fellow!" To this self-glorification secretly adds, "*I am not. I am frugal and painstaking.*" "My neighbour is vain, conceited, and unpleasant." Self-glorification says, "*I am humble, affable, and much beloved.*" "My neighbour is a poor, silly fool." "Not so my darling self," observes self-glorification. "No, I am wise, prudent, free from all foolish acts, thank Heaven!" "My neighbour is profligate, impious, a great sinner—where does the miserable man expect to go to?" Self-glorification smilingly whispers, "*I am sober and temperate in all things, pious, holy: glory be to me for my great goodness!*" The backbiter mostly gossips on those faults in his neighbours which he looks upon as foils to his own supposed virtues.

Worms! worms that we are! Sit we in daily, hourly judgment on ourselves! let the itching fingers that would

lift the veil from, and the prying eyes that would look upon the foul diseases or light sicknesses of our brothers' souls, boldly tear the cloak from our own sores and ulcers, and firmly gaze on the loathsome sight we may perchance behold in our own hearts. One leper should not point at, jeer at, nor revile another poor leprous creature, deeming himself to be clean the while. No! with pitying hands we should throw a thick cloak over our neighbour's sins, faults, and follies; whilst with kind eyes we gaze on his virtues, using our tongue and lips in his lawful praise, keeping them mute as to his defects, and never, never trumpeting forth his weaknesses, nor obliquely hinting at spot or blemish which we have, or fancy that we have, discovered in his soul.

A lady among Mr. Singleton's visitors, a maiden Scottish lady, deeply read in all the spectre literature of the day, and one who more than half believed in what she read, whispered it as her opinion that "the house" was haunted, and that maybe the nabob was "fashed wi' bogies," which would fully account for all his modes and "worry-cow ways." This whisper going from mouth to ear, and from many mouths to many ears, got abroad in the form of a true narrative of the manner in which Mr. Singleton was haunted by the ghosts of "natives he had flogged to death," and how the said ghosts were bringing him to his grave.

It was, moreover, whispered by the country people that there was no good in "his" having buried the bones which were dug up in the haunted wing, or in having had that wing pulled down, seeing that it was solemnly stated and firmly believed that over the spot from whence the chest had been dug, there hovered each night a large and faintly-shining halo, like unto the light of the moon, and that in the middle of this halo was seen a little babe,

motionless and still, its head sunk upon its breast, with legs and arms pressed against its body.

“Nabob should a’ buried ’em in holy ground, and *then* ’twouldn’t a’ happened, bless ’ee. But lor’ there ! they be a unfort’nate fam’ly : some says ’tis all along of pulling down a old church, and disturbing the dead, and a building the hall with the church ruins. *I* can’t say I’se sure, but it *do* seem to stand by reason, somehow.”

Mr. Singleton heard none of these rumours and discouragements, neither did he notice nor care about the preparations which his son was making for his wedding. His gloomy days passed wearily ; he having done with earth, yet not being fit to leave it ; pleased by nought, annoyed by all things, his wealth as much a matter of course to him as breathing, no bright light shining through the mists of this world to guide and cheer him. He was dark, hopeless, full of spleen, ennui, and loathing.



### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE FATAL WORD.

It wanted but a week to the fulfilling of young Singleton’s fondest hopes, when his father, sick in body and sad in heart, made up his mind to speak to Mr. Blenkins concerning his pain and ailments. The nabob trembled as he heard the doctor’s gig rolling along the well-gravelled drive. It stopped ; the door-bell sounded long and loud—a knell it seemed to the ears of the wealthy invalid.

“Mr. Blenkins !” quoth Mr. Rumley, announcing, wheezing, and giving entrance to Mr. Blenkins, clean, well powdered, and looking but little older than when we first became acquainted with him,

"Well, sir, and how are *you* to day?" inquired the doctor, as he seated himself beside his patient, who stretched out his arm, giving his pulse to Mr. Blenkins' fingers.

"Hum!" growled the man of science; "uncommon shaky and nervous, my good sir! Let's look at your tongue."

The trembling tongue having been protruded and inspected, "Hum!" again growled Mr. Blenkins, scratching his nose and shutting his eyes; "have you had anything unpleasant to worry or frighten you, sir?"

"Yes," faltered the nabob.

"I thought as much."

Here followed a silence between doctor and patient. The doctor watched the gambols of a large blue-bottle fly, whilst the patient with beating heart was making attempts at speaking, somewhat like those efforts at speech which we make in a fit of the nightmare.

The blue-bottle having settled on a window-pane, Mr. Blenkins withdrew his eyes from it, placed a hand on either knee, and, without looking at him, thus addressed Mr. Singleton:—

"You haven't felt any new symptoms lately, have you, sir?"

"Yes, I have," gasped the nabob.

"Hum! I thought so by your looks ever since you came home."

Here another silence followed. Mr. Singleton bit his under lip to still its quivering; Mr. Blenkins had recourse to the blue-bottle. That buzzing creature being again in motion, flew about, occasionally butting the window pane in a determined manner, which evolutions on his part seemed entirely to absorb the doctor's mind.

"Come now, sir! let's hear what you feel," cried Mr. Blenkins, drily.

The blue-bottle had again halted, and the doctor deemed that the patient had somewhat recovered from the agitation, which he had noticed when seemingly entirely wrapped up in the movements of the great hairy fly.

Mr. Singleton, making a desperate effort, began in smothered tones to lay his sensations before Mr. Blenkins, eyeing the doctor's countenance sharply, with a distressed expression in his own. Mr. Blenkins' face was calm, grave; nothing to be learnt from it, except that he was giving his whole attention to the case; nodding his head from time to time, and telling off the symptoms on his fingers as they fell from the patient's lips.

"Hum! I'll give you a little ether, sir. Where's the bottle? Shall I ring for Goldup?" said Mr. Blenkins, after a little reflection.

"No, no! I don't want any one here but you. There's the ether on the table in the corner."

There was dead silence whilst the doctor made ready the dose, presenting which to the nabob he said—

"Take that, sir; it will quiet your nerves a bit."

Mr. Singleton, having taken the ether, fixed his eyes on Mr. Blenkins, and said—

"It's nothing serious, I suppose, is it?"

"Does *that* hurt you, sir?" was the reply, the doctor pressing his knuckles against Mr. Singleton's stomach.

"Yes," returned the nabob, wincing, still gleaning nothing from his doctor's countenance.

"Hum!" followed by another silence.

"Feel sick in the morning?" inquired Mr. Blenkins, eyeing the ceiling.

"Yes."

"I'll send you something: there must be a change in the medicine. It'll be labelled with full directions."

So saying, Mr. Blenkins arose to depart; but Mr.

Singleton, seizing him by the arm, bade him again be seated.

"You've not told me what's the matter with me. What is it? Is it gout flying about the stomach?"

"No, sir."

"Indigestion?"

"No, sir, I can't say it is."

"It's cursed painful. Is it liver affecting the stomach?"

"Why no, sir, it's not!"

"Diseased nerves? Tic-douloureux?"

"No, sir; no, sir. It's none of those," replied Mr. Blenkins with a shake of the head.

"D—n it, then, what is it? Speak out! Do you take me for a girl, or a fool?" shouted Mr. Singleton in a burst of pettish rage.

"I suppose, sir, you've no matters of business left unsettled," returned Mr. Blenkins, no ways moved by his patient's irritability.

"Is it an incurable disease, then?" stammered Mr. Singleton, turning ashy pale, and again grasping the doctor's bony arm.

"It's always as well to leave nothing unsettled whilst you're able to settle it, my good sir."

"That is no answer to my question. Tell me this instant, sir, what is the matter with me!"

Mr. Blenkins pulled out his watch, returning it to the fob with a "Bless my soul! I'd no notion it was so late. Good morning, Mr. Singleton, sir! I'll look in to-morrow."

Mr. Singleton's pale face flushed; he started from his chair, appearing through nervous excitement as though he possessed the vigour of youth, seized Mr. Blenkins by the collar, knit his thick eyebrows, cast off his Indian languor, and in loud and commanding tones bade the doctor tell him at once what was the cause of his pain and misery.

"Don't be violent, sir! There's no use in that," cried Mr. Blenkins, putting up his hand to his queue, in order to make sure that the nabob's violence had not put it out of place.

"I am not to be played with! Speak directly! Tell me what disease I have, or I'll throttle you!"

"Cancer!"

"Cancer?"

"Yes, sir. Since you *must* know, you've a cancer, and it will gain ground rapidly."

Where was now the rich man's rage—where was his momentary strength—where was his commanding attitude—where his loud, strong tones?

He let go the ruffled doctor, dropped his trembling hand, stared wildly, and whispered huskily, with parched throat and tongue—

"It is impossible! Did you say cancer?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Shall I suffer much?"

"Why yes, sir. You'll have some sharp pain to go through before you've done with it," replied Mr. Blenkins, peering from the window, and arranging his rumpled shirt-frill.

"How long shall I live?" inquired Mr. Singleton, his face covered with a ghastly paleness, the sweat bursting forth on his forehead, and around his mouth.

"Confound the lad! he'll throw him down and break his knees. John! Here! John! Stop! Not he: deuce take him, and the runaway brute too!"

With these words Mr. Blenkins rushed out of the room, and sped from the house.

Mr. Singleton mechanically followed with his eyes the doctor's gig, which was to be seen from the window, the old chestnut horse tearing over the smooth grass of the park;



whilst the doctor's hatless groom tried in vain to stop the runaway old steed.

Mr. Singleton beheld his medical attendant trudging after his gig and groom ; but what he saw brought no idea to his mind. He sank down on his sofa, vacantly eyeing the ceiling ; repeating to himself the words " cancer," " sharp pain to go through ;" repeating them again and again. He then listened to the loud song of the blackbird and thrush, which seemed to come from remote regions in the heavens, sounding clear, strong, and cheerful, as though there was neither pain nor misery in the world.

Mahomet crept into the room, as was his wont, when Mr. Blenkins left.

" Go ! " cried Mr. Singleton, impatiently, in Hindostanee. " No one is to come near me till I ring. Go ! "

Mahomet crept out again ; and the nabob was left alone with his misery. He arose, paced slowly to and fro, then looked from his window, viewing the scene without. There was the merry sunshine ; there was the dark, cool shade ; there, in the distance, ran the sparkling river, winding along through the green meads. On the hill-side sheep were calmly feeding ; smoke from a cottage chimney arose blue and curling against a background of green trees ; the heavens above were azure, not a cloud hiding their wide, deep space from view.

Yes ! there was the well-known scene on which the sick man had oft-times carelessly gazed, on which he now looked with deep despair. The whole landscape, and all its details, seemed cruel, obdurate, mocking. There it was as it had been, and would be again ; whilst *he* was struck for death ; about to go to his grave through agony of mind, and torture of body ; no living soul able to save him—no ! not for all the gold he possessed. Nature was unchanged, brilliant, gay : giving no token by storm, or rending, or floods, or

by any other sign, of the dreadful woe that had come upon him—of the awful death that awaited him.

Then his mind roved back to India ; to purple skies and blazing heat ; to fiendish excitement and deeds of darkness. Faces and figures, long since passed away, arose before him ; small events and trifling came to his remembrance, with scraps of songs and long forgotten jests ; together with thoughts of what he had been in those days ; how much admired—how courted—how bold—how ardent—how remorseless ; to himself a demi-god ; to others an object of praise and envy.

“ Am I that man ? ” he asked himself. He looked on a portrait of what he had been ; he viewed his present self in the glass ; saw the drawn and death-like air of his face ; the dimness of the eye ; the ashy pallor of the skin ; the corpse-like expression of the mouth. He gazed on himself with a forced calmness, until a strong flood of despairing agony rolled over his soul, and he threw himself on the couch, hiding the light of day from his eyes with his clutching trembling hands.

Oh, how his heart fainted within him when, as he felt the pang of pain shoot through him, he reflected that far worse agony than that must be his lot ; that there was no escape for him ; that he was doomed ; that he must abide his fate. Rage, too, boiled in his breast. That he who had turned from the least vexation, who had suffered nought to come between himself and his pleasures, who had made delight and ease his study, should be thus struck, should feel a strong and mighty hand holding him down to his torture : this caused a brutal impious rage to be let loose within him, making him grind his teeth and quiver in his angry agonizing despair.

The polluted mind of this man of pleasure had not wherewithal to bear his torment. He could not take it

meekly, patiently ; looking beyond the days of pain to ages of bliss. He felt no faithful trusting in the wisdom that smote him ; no ! his soul rolled and tossed in its restlessness like a demon rolled and tossed on the waves of a sea of fire.

A loud merry laugh, full of life and happiness, burst upon his ear. He knew it to be the laugh of Brownlow. He looked upon him from the window, as he stood, tall, strong, and healthy, on the lawn beneath, talking to young Singleton, who looked pleased, excited, with a swagger of triumph and self-approbation. They were talking of the day of happiness so near at hand.

The nabob turned away cursing ; whilst the sight of his son brought thoughts and scenes before him which made solitude unbearable.

Just then the first dinner-bell, loudly rung by a stalwart young footman full of health and void of care, brought Mr. Goldup to his master's door. He rapped with obsequious knuckles ; gliding in with a " Beg pardon, sir ; but I was afraid you might have *dropped* off into a *sy-esta* this fine warm afternoon, and not have heard the *fast* bell."

The briskness of Mr. Goldup's voice and manner struck disagreeably on his master. The valet was so of this world, and so full of life ; whilst *he* was no longer of the earth, as it were : whilst *he* had heard a word pronounced that seemed to cut him off from life, and all its pleasures.

" How long is it since Mr. Blenkins left ? "

" About an hour and a half ago, sir."

To Mr. Singleton it appeared hours and hours ago ; he felt as if a whole day had passed away since Mr. Blenkins had spoken the fatal word.

Mr. Goldup observed a great change in his master ; he seemed so aged and shaken that the valet, with all his *retenu*, could not help stealing frequent glances at him. The nabob, irritable and quick, perceived this.

“What are you staring at? Dress me!” he cried pettishly.

Mr. Goldup obeyed. As his toilette proceeded, Mr. Singleton, dwelling on the awful fate before him, felt as though he was assisting at the dressing of some other man; so little could he believe that the being so carefully washed, powdered, arrayed, and perfumed, made up for society and the world, was he himself; a creature whom one word had cut off from all hope; whose only prospect was a long and painful journey, weary and gloomy, to the grave.

When Mr. Goldup had finished his task, had called Mahomet, and had seen the nabob seek the drawing-room, leaning on the arm of his “dirty dog,” he betook himself to his fellow-servant, Mr. Rumley, who was taking his afternoon “dish o’ tea” with a “thimble-full” of brandy in it, by way of preparation to the fatigue of waiting at dinner.

Quoth Mr. Goldup, “’Pon my veracity, Mr. Rumley, sir, the nabob’s uncommon queer this afternoon. He’s been ever so long all by hisself; a proceeding which he never took afore, to my certain knowledge. Between you and me and the post, sir, I shouldn’t wonder if Dr. *Blinkins* hadn’t told him something of an unsatisfactory natur’ ”

“Like enough, sir,” returned Mr. Rumley, solemnly. “Nabobs is mortal as well as their betters. If he goes, I hope we shall be left decent mourning and a month’s wages: I believe it’s usual.”

Mr. Singleton entered the drawing-room, and there found all his guests met together ready to receive him. How their smart dresses, their smiling looks, their regulation-society converse and manner jarred his soul. To him it seemed that they should have welcomed him with tears and lamentations—with wailing and cries of woe. To their inquiries concerning his health he scarcely replied, such a mockery did it appear to him

When Lund sidled up to him with a smile, and a debonnaire announcement that "the little warriors were drawn up in order of battle, only waiting for the coming of the 'conquering hero,'" the nabob sighed, and saying in languid tones, with a lordly wave of the hand, "I shall not play chess to-day, Mr. Lund," took his accustomed seat on the sofa, falling into silence; and by his look and manner giving his obsequious guests to understand that they were free to converse together, but that he did not wish to be spoken to.

During dinner, making a desperate effort, he rallied for a time: tried to forget the events of the morning; talked fast, with wild looks and excited mien; drank much wine, and ate scarcely anything. The "Dasher" and her son, who, with Almeria and Sir Theophilus, were of the party, seconded him with their noisy rattle. The damped guests revived; all was gaiety and excitement. In the midst of the universal merriment, however, suddenly Mr. Singleton felt the pangs of pain; the voice of Mr. Blenkins seemed to sound in his ear, saying that one word which haunted him—that one word which had changed all things in his sight. The laughter around him, the smiling lips and flashing eyes of the laughers, smote him with melancholy dark and drear. sweat of fear and anguish burst out from every pore; to remain any longer among his guests he felt to be impossible.

"Mr. Lund, be good enough to ring the bell twice," he feebly cried.

The laughter ceased; all eyes were turned upon him. All present were silent and breathless on beholding him: silent and breathless as if a spectre had appeared amongst them in the midst of their mirth and revelry—so anxious and ghastly did their entertainer look.

Mahomet having appeared in answer to the bell, Mr. Singleton arose and leant upon his servant's arm.

"I do not feel very well; pray excuse me. Richard, you will take my place, and Mr. Lund will assist you. I hope to join you in the evening, when I shall be well again, no doubt."

So saying, Mr. Singleton slowly left the room.

"I hope it's nothing serious enough to put off my wedding," thought young Singleton, whilst a condoling buzz and murmur arose around the table.

The Scottish maiden lady was fully persuaded that Mr. Singleton had seen one if not several "bogies;" Lund bethought himself that his patron would soon be called upon to inherit his father's wealth; the Rev. Sylvester Evelyn, hazily perceiving that something had gone wrong, suddenly said grace, as the third course was being put on the table; winding up with a "'Pon m'honour, hope you'll excuse me!" on finding out his mistake. The "Dasher" and Fotheringay did their best again to whip up the spirits of the company; so far succeeding that by the time dessert arrived, everyone was once more talking about their breath; all longing for the absence of young Singleton, that they might freely comment on the death-like looks, forced spirits and sudden exit of his father.

Mr. Singleton on reaching his room groaned aloud.

"Tell Goldup to come here!" he cried impatiently to Mahomet; and Goldup came. "Goldup! you, yourself mind, must get on the swiftest horse; you must go full gallop for Blenkins: tell him he must come to me *directly*; if he cannot, tell him he must *immediately* send me something to lull my pain."

"Bless me, sir; I hope you're not unwell! Spasms probably."

"Damnation, fellow! Leave the room this instant; and do as you are bid! The hookah, Mahomet."

Mr. Blenkins sent his patient a strong anodyne; so

speedily brought by Mr. Goldup, and so effectual in its power, that before the men had sat their two hours over their wine, Mr. Singleton was among the ladies, surrounded by their officious care; and having by his appearance suddenly silenced the battery of gossip and small-talk that had been opened on his absent person.

The nabob seated himself to cards, as usual; but he revoked, and made a thousand other unwonted mistakes: faults which Sir Theophilus his partner meekly passed over; eyeing him from time to time with pity; feeling that he was playing with a doomed man.

Young Singleton, too, looked from time to time on his father, thinking how like he was to a phantom—how like the portrait of the first Singleton.

“I hope,” said Richard tenderly to his beloved, “that my father is not going to be ill enough to cause our happiness to be delayed, Almeria;” and he fixed his large dark eyes with burning gaze on hers.

“Oh no!” she returned, looking bright and happy beyond description: “I am always fortunate; and a gipsy told me I always should be so. I feel perfectly confident that I shall be married on the appointed day.”

As that day drew near, the excitement of young Singleton increased. Since his engagement with Almeria he had felt happy for the first time in his life. He no longer sought Janet, nor the cool shade of the plane-tree. Little did he know of the misery he had brought upon the only woman who truly loved him. He thought but of Almeria, saw but her, and a long vista of bright and endless happiness.

In Warton there was one heavily sad heart on account of Rose, and that was the heart which beat beneath the baby breast of the fat rector. Being slow, lazy, and behind-hand in everything, he had continued calling on Mrs. Adams, to sit and stare at Rose, long after she was engaged to Brown-

low. He had made a confidant of the parish clerk, a fat, sleepy old being, a votary of strong ale, as easy very nearly as "the parson." He ever answered to his reverence's doubting "'Pom m' honour, don't know what to do!" by scratching his bald pate and saying, "Well! *dong'd* now if I can tell 'ee, sir. I *guv* my missus a green gown in the hay-field, and got her to name the day; but I don't 'spose, somehow, Miss would like that: 'taint quite gentlefolks' ways. Lor' love 'ee, sir! it's hard to say, bain't it now?"

From intending to propose, the Rev. Sylvester Evelyn began to feel as though he had done so; contentedly settling in his own mind that he and Rose would one day be married. So he dawdled on at Mrs. Adams'; assuring his clerk, from time to time, that it was "all right," and that "Miss Rose" was on the high road to become Mrs. Sylvester Evelyn.

It was a dreadful blow to the Rev. Silly when it became known to him that instead of Mrs. Evelyn, Rose was to be Mrs. Brownlow. He retired to bed for the day, administering to himself, for the comfort of his woes, much strong ale from a huge silver tankard placed at his bed-side; bewailing and drinking in turn, till sleep closed his eyelids heavily, sealing them up with the signet of Somnus.

On the following Sunday, a doleful man was Evelyn, looking like unto a melancholy cherub: the white surplice spread over his wide shoulders, figuring as fleecy clouds whereon the cherub rested.

Mistake upon mistake he made; his eyes, moist and heavy, ever wandering towards Rose. The clerk's suppressed "*Dong it*, you're out again, sir!" was without effect towards putting him in the right way.

At length, having countermarched various portions of the service, to the confusion of the congregation and the despair of the clerk, when he came to the publishing the banns of marriage, his voice failed him; he rubbed his eyes with his



surplice sleeve, and muttering, "'Pom m' honour, hope you'll excuse me ; don't feel well !" he hurried away, leaving his curate to officiate in his place. He sought his parsonage and his bed. To the cook, who let him in, he nodded ; then blowing his nose slowly, he sniffed like an oppressed schoolboy ; muttering sorrowfully to himself, " Been crossed in love, and can't rally."

Young Singleton narrowly watched his father's looks, so fearful was he lest the nabob's ill health should cause his wedding-day to be put off. Mr. Singleton coolly informed Richard, to that person's great relief, that his health would not allow him to be present at the ceremony, as it would take place too early in the day ; but that his son was not to make any difference on his account.

Young Singleton had presented splendid jewels to his beloved ; he viewed with delight the new travelling carriage in which they were to proceed on their wedding tour ; Lund, who looked on all these preparations dolorously, grinning complacently as the bridegroom poured his egotistical discouraging into his unwilling ear.



## CHAPTER XIV

### GRETN A GREEN.

THE day before Singleton's long-looked-for day of felicity arrived. Up rose the ruddy sun, saluted by the loudly singing birds and lowing cattle. Richard awoke and lay gazing on the blue sky without ; the tree-tops nodding before his window ; the red rays shed on his pillow by the morning sun. He listened dreamily to the merry fowls of heaven, and finished some thirty stanzas, coined in honour of love and Almeria.

The moments flew ; sleep, pleasant morning sleep, was again settling on his eyelids when the stable-clock, slowly, with clear and ringing sound, struck eight. Mr. Goldup's lean knuckles smote the bedroom door.

"Come in!" drawled young Singleton; and the valet slid to his bedside.

"A note for you, if you please, sir, from Lady Fotheringay. Her la'ship would be obliged by a verbal reply."

"Eh!" cried Singleton, now wide awake, and raising himself on his elbow. "Nothing the matter, is there?"

"Don't know indeed, sir. A groom a horseback brought the note, and he's waiting."

Young Singleton broke the seal of the three-cornered epistle. The contents were as follows:—

"DEAR SINGLETON,

"Here's the devil to pay! Come to me directly.

Ever yours,

MARGARET FOTHERINGAY."

Singleton sprang from his bed.

"What answer, sir?" inquired Mr. Goldup, perceiving that Richard had forgotten all about it in the hurry of the moment.

"My compliments, and I'll be there directly. Order the horses to be round as soon as possible."

The more haste the worst speed. Singleton, agitated and nervous, trying to do everything at once, sadly retarded his dressing. With trembling hand he seized his razor, gashed his cheek; stamped with rage, sponging up the blood only for it to appear again. Court-plaister was in vain; the springing blood oozed out on every side of it, to fall, drop! drop! drop! on a pair of buckskins in which Singleton had arrayed himself with great effort, so tight and well-fitting were they.

"Oh! damn it! confound it! what an infernal bore! and here it is all over my shirt, too!" cried Singleton, pulling furiously at the bell-rope.

"Horses is at the door, sir!" said Mr. Goldup, on making his appearance. "Bless me, sir, what a catastrophe to your countenance. I'll run and fetch some *halum*: *halum's* an excellent *stypick*; stop it in a minute, Mr. Richard, sir!"

"Give me a shirt and the other pair of buckskins!"

"Better assuage the blood first, sir, or the same accident might recur over again!"

Mr. Goldup, with his monkey speed and cleverness, soon set young Singleton's cheek to rights, helped him to dress, and started him off for Drayton Court.

Singleton was half wild with agitation as he rode along.

"It must concern *me*, or she would not have sent for me," he thought. "Is it anything about Almeria? She is the only one at Drayton *I* have any interest in! What can it be? I shall go mad!" He spurred his galloping horse to a harder gallop still; flying along as recklessly as the Wild Huntsman, of ghastly memory.

On arriving at Drayton he was shown at once into Lady Fotheringay's dressing-room.

The "Dasher," dressed in a cloth travelling-pelisse, was arranging her black Brutus at the glass.

"There, Singleton, man," she cried, flinging him a note, "read that! Here's a pretty commence! Here's a row in the dog-kennel! Bring breakfast, Fanny, and a cup for Mr. Singleton."

"Dashers" did not pique themselves on softness or gentleness; they were "rough and ready," tearing swaggering females, just as dreadful and unfeminine in their way as the "strong-minded," "intellectual" variety of the present day are in theirs. Lady Fotheringay being a "Dasher" of the first water, it is not to be wondered at that she should

thus brutally, and without preparation, plunge young Singleton into an abyss of woe. Whilst he read, her ladyship, not quite content with the complexion she had gifted herself with, drew forth her rouge-pot and proceeded to add a little more carmine to her cheeks, but more especially to her chin.

“ Well, man, what do you think of it, eh ? It has quite knocked Sir Theophilus up.—Hullo ! you’re not going to faint, are you ? ”

Singleton shook from head to foot ; his teeth chattered ; speak he could not. No wonder, seeing that he had just read the following note :—

*“ Drayton, Tuesday Night, 10 o’clock.*

*“ DEAR MAMMA,*

“ When you get this note I shall be ‘ over the hills and far away ’ with my darling Septimus. We are off for Gretna Green. I hope you and papa will forgive us, as it is useless to make a fuss over an event which cannot be altered, and the Church is a very gentlemanly profession. Septimus is not rich, but papa is, and could get him a living, where we should live very happily ‘ ever after,’ as the fairy tales say. Septimus has been about here in the disguise of a sailor with one arm ; he buttoned it up in his jacket, and it did very well. We hid our notes to one another in a hole of the old sun-dial by the hermitage ; and we should have been off long ago, only poor Septimus lost his father two months since ; and he said it would not be decent for him to run away too soon after the sad event.

“ Good night, dear mamma. I hear Septimus screaming like a screech-owl ; which is the signal that a post-chaise and four are waiting under the great yew-tree in Love-lane. My best love to dear papa, and I hope that neither you nor he will be cross to Septimus and me.

“ Your affectionate child,

“ ALMERIA.”

"P.S.—I really don't know how to apologize to young Singleton, for having made a stalking-horse of him. I hope he will forgive me, and marry some one else as soon as possible. Of course all the jewels and presents will be sent back to him. Septimus is screaming again, so I must leave off.

"Adieu."

"Come, Singleton," cried the 'Dasher'; "rouse yourself like a man! Drink your coffee, and scribble a line by your groom, to have your rattle-traps ready at your lodge, for us to pick up as we pass. You and I are going in chase."

"I can't write," sighed Singleton; "my hand shakes so!"

Speaking was too great an effort for miserable Singleton: he let his head fall on the table between his hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Don't be such a cry-babby, old fellow! Come! take your coffee and an egg. I can't have you go fainting and bellowing all the way to Gretna Green. Be a man for once in your life!"

Having thus spoken, the "Dasher" protruded her head from the window, and addressed herself to Singleton's groom, who was beneath it; and who respectfully touched his hat as her ladyship harangued him.

"Here! You! Just gallop back to the Hall as hard as you can, and tell Goldup to pack things enough for your master to serve a couple of days and nights. Have 'em left at the lodge directly, and we'll pick 'em up as we pass, in half an hour's time. Look sharp, d'ye hear; and there's half-a-crown for you!"

"Come, Singleton," resumed her ladyship, continuing her breakfast; "behave like a man! I wanted my boy Thof to go with me, but the fellow wouldn't give up the

prize-fight at Northway this afternoon: two hundred guineas a side, and his pet, Plucky Tim, in prime condition. However, as it's only a parson, I thought you'd do just as well; all I want's a pair of breeches, just for the look of the thing: I'd have put 'em on myself, only people make such a row about nothing at all. We've got a lot of people coming to-day for the sport to-morrow; there's no time to put 'em off now, so Sir T. must fight it out with them as he can. By the by, he'll call on your father this afternoon, and tell him Almeria's off with the 'Bishop,' and all that sort of thing, you know. I suppose there'll be no end of tittle-tattle about it; and they'll all blame her, and pity you, my man. Here's another cup of coffee for you. Look sharp! the horses and the 'yellow' have been here I don't know how long; I began to think you smelt a rat, and had blown your brains out, you were so long coming!" and here my Lady Fotheringay began to whistle "Nancy Dawson;" whistling being a great accomplishment of hers; and, indeed, so well and so sweetly did she perform, that any one might have supposed themselves to be listening to a first-rate flageolet player.

Singleton heard but little of what she said, feeling as though in a dream; yet he made out that she very much looked down upon him, which did not serve as a balm to his wounded feelings. He mechanically followed her ladyship downstairs, and handed her into the "yellow;" she preferring a post-chaise for the expedition, as being lighter than her own carriage.

On entering she was greeted by her *varmint* terrier, Pepper; who being fully aware that his mistress was bound for Gretna Green (for dogs always know all about everything), had determined to escort her there; and had ensconced himself in the chaise for that purpose. This was all very well, and her ladyship patting him, cried—"Ha!

Peppy, Peppyman! You *shall* come, old fellow, and pin the 'Bishop' for us; but when young Singleton attempted to get into the "yellow," Peppyman violently objected, having a rooted hatred for him. No sooner did the terrier spy the man, than, darting off the seat, he snarled, showed his teeth, set up the hair on his neck and back, and planting himself at the chaise door, like a gun in an embrasure, barked so loud and shrill that no one could be heard for him; besides snarling at intervals, and snapping at Singleton as he stood on the last step.

The "Dasher," writhing with laughter, tried in vain to pacify her pet; at length, seizing him by the neck, she held him out at the side window, whilst Singleton leaped into the carriage; when Pepper, being dropped, rushed round with a view to taking the enemy in the rear; a movement the dog would have effected with the greatest success, had not the chaise steps been already up; thus cutting off his attack.

"All right!" and off whisked the chaise, amidst Pepper's frantic skipping, jumping, running, tumbling down and up again evolutions, and his loud, shrill, angry barking.

"What a darling varmint little man it is!" quoth the "Dasher," drying the tears caused by vehement laughter. "Here we are, Singleton, off at last! I dare say you'd rather lean back in your corner and come the Penseroso, eh? I'll have a look at the papers; Sir Thof hasn't seen 'em, but he's too much in the dumps to care for that sort of thing to-day. There's such a murder in Rutland: I *do* like a murder. Did you ever hear of the old woman, who told her doctor, among other bad symptoms of her state of health, that she couldn't 'relish her murders.' Isn't it good? Says so much! Ah! you're not listening, I see; perhaps it's as well to go to sleep and forget it all! I'll wake you for a sandwich and some ale; I've got the yellow well-victualled,

so as not to stop to bait on the road—loses time. I don't know but what it's better fun, after all, than the wedding would have been. I don't see the murder. Oh, yes! here it is; a good long account, too. I say, Singleton, I think you made a mistake; girls like Almeria don't care for poetic sentiment, and all that sort of thing: it was thrown away on her, 'pon my life it was! You should have tried a milk-soppy miss that would have cried over your verses, and thought you a very fine fellow. That Rose Adams, that Brownlow's to go in double harness with, seems to be just the sort of match to have suited you. I wonder you didn't put your hat on her, instead of on Merry, 'pon my life I do!"

"For Heaven's sake, Lady Fotheringay, *do* be quiet, and leave me to myself! I feel half dead!" burst pettishly from young Singleton, who winced and writhed beneath the lady's words.

"So-ho there, poor fellow! so-ho! quiet there! or you'll be all of a lather. Come! I won't bother you any more. Good night!—morning, I mean; God bless you! Go to sleep!"

So saying, her ladyship buried herself in the account of the murder, leaving Singleton to his reflections.

These were bitter enough. Happiness suddenly wrenched from him, this was hard to bear; especially as the happiness was of so tender and passionate a kind.

Besides the blow that had smitten his heart—bruising it for life, as Singleton told himself—his vanity had been sorely hurt. That *his* Almeria, so beloved, so worshipped, the star of his existence, should love "that grinning parson" far better than she loved him; that for the sake of that being she should have made a tool of *him*; that she should requite his passion by causing him to be held up to ridicule, or to pity: all this gave his wounded vanity pain and torture such as it had never felt before.



Then, too, the names of Rose and Brownlow, mentioned by his travelling companion, stirred up the demon within him. Instead of feeling a gleam of pleasure that his friend and his old playmate should be happy, untouched by his misfortunes, all his bitter hatred for Brownlow, all his envy and spite, ran riot in his breast, tripling every woe. In his rage he connected Brownlow's happiness with his own unhappiness. The idea that "that fellow," the man whom he had never yet been able to outshine, the man who had been beforehand with him in carrying off Rose, should wed her on the appointed day—should enter on happiness, beloved and loving, whilst *he*, Singleton, had been made a fool of—led on to disappointment by a woman he adored—this idea roused the blackest envy and hatred within him.

Whilst the "Dasher" read, whistled, talked, ate and drank with the greatest glee, as though she had been going on a party of pleasure, young Singleton, with closed eyes and clenched hands, moodily ruminated; wounded love, venomous hatred, and wrathful envy, being the guides of his thoughts, leading them on to diabolical wickedness in their devices.

"I'm afraid, Singleton, man, we shall be too late to spoil their sport. Here's evening coming on, and they had such a start of us; the only chance is, that as they're not overburthened with cash, maybe they travelled with a chaise and pair, trusting to their long start. I don't suppose you'd have her, though, even if she and the 'Bishop' have not been handcuffed by the blacksmith; she's used you too badly for forgiveness."

Singleton's reply to this speech from Lady Fotheringay was a groan, and a few words which she could not make out; wherefore her ladyship, striking up "A flaxen-headed ploughboy," in her clear whistle, allowed him to relapse into his dreary musings.

It was near midnight before they reached Gretna Green. The "Dasher" seemed as brisk and lively as she did at first starting; whereas Singleton was pale and feverish, feeling sore from head to foot, as though he had been rolled down some rocky steep.

The chaise drew up before the little inn. Out jumped the "Dasher," and loudly thumped against the door, calling "House!" in a manly manner.

"Come now, my good people," she said, on being let in, "let's know who you've got here! We're after a runaway couple, and I take it we shall find 'em here safe and sound, for we mean to search the house."

Singleton felt that he played but a ridiculous figure in allowing a woman thus to take the lead; yet, knowing that he had no power to act otherwise, he, with sickening heart and deadly-revengeful feelings, followed her ladyship in her search for Septimus and Almeria, his head aching and throbbing as though it would burst. No Septimus and Almeria were there! The people at the inn declared that no couple had been there for the last fortnight.

"What's to be done now, Singleton, man, eh? It looks rather like a wild goose chase, don't it? We may as well unkennel the blacksmith, though, and hear what he's got to say on the subject. Hallo! you seem scarcely able to toddle—have an arm?" and so saying her ladyship stuck out her arm with a masculine and patronizing air, which arm Singleton scornfully refused.

Lady Fotheringay and Richard walked to the blacksmith's close at hand, where my lady rapped and called as she had done at the inn; whilst Singleton gazed on the moon and the immense halo that surrounded her, in the calm and fathomless space spread around this world and all its worldly miseries.

"I wish I was dead!" thought the miserable lover

"Bide a wee, bide a wee!" called a loud voice from within—a voice that seemed as though it would shake the cottage down.

"Take your time!" returned the "Dasher;" adding, "I tell you what, Singleton, I vote we sleep here if we can't find 'em; you seem knocked up, and I don't want to be guilty of culpable homicide, as they call it, by overworking you: bed and a hot mash will be the thing for you. I suspect the 'Bishop' has tricked us somehow: he was always a sly fox."

The door of the blacksmith's shop was now opened, and out stepped into the moonlight a square-built, red-headed Scotchman, dressed in shirt, breeches, and scarlet night-cap; his legs and feet were bare.

"What are ye wanting, gentlemen?" he inquired.

"I'm a lady, man!" returned the "Dasher," laughing, and flattered at the mistake.

"I shudna hae thocht it, wi' yer beaver hat, and yer lang cloth *beejamin*, and yer manfu' voice! Ye're no a roon-awa' couple wanting me, are ye?"

"D' ye hear that, Singleton? How good! No, my man, we're not a 'roon-awa' couple; but we want to know who you've been marrying to-day. Come, speak out; look sharp!"

"Weel, then, deevil a couple hae I married sin' yestreen fortnight."

"What! not to-day? Not a long slip of a parson with a pretty face, and a beautiful girl, very much like me?"

"Na, na! I ha' nae seen that descreption o' couple. The last was a ne'er-do-weel soger officer, and a wee bit lassie o' saxteen."

"I tell you what, my man, you can't impose on me. It's my girl ran away with the tutor, and left word they were off for Gretna Green between ten and eleven last night."

“They ha’ nae been here, then.”

“If you’ve been bribed to silence,” cried Singleton, speaking huskily, “here’s a five-pound note as a counter-bribe. Now, what have you to say?”

The Scotchman stared, but took the note, and went into the cottage, returning immediately.

“The note’s unco gude and quite right, and I’m mickle obleeged to ye, sir.”

“Speak, then!”

“Weel, then, gin ye maun ken the truth, I’ll joost tell ye, as ye wish to ken ——”

“Don’t stand humming and hawing all night, man; speak out! When did you marry the parson and the young lady?”

“Weel, I was joost aboot to tell ye, when ye brak in and——”

“Confound it, man, *will* you speak to the point or not, without any more of your Scotch fiddling on ‘joosts’ and ‘weels’?”

“Weel, sin’ ye’re sae little *geefted* wi’ patience, I’ll joost tell ye I hae never clapped een on the couple in mee life!”

“Then, why the deuce did you not say so at once?”

“Weel, I did; but ye wadna believe a puir body.”

“Why did you take the young gentleman’s money, you Scotch bloodhound, you?”

“Because he gie it me o’ his ain free will, as a coonter-bribe!”

“You *have* been bribed, then?”

“Na! the jontleman was free to think sae gin it pleased him, and to coonter-bribe me, and I was free to tak the note; but I gie ye my word, as an honest Presbeteerian smithie, the young couple hae nae been here; and the last I married were joost the ne’er-do-weel soger officer and the wee bit lassie o’ saxteen.”

“They’ve put us on a wrong scent, Singleton, that’s clear enough ; and cleverly done too, though we *are* the victims,” said the “Dasher,” as they returned to the inn ; where, having called for tea, bottled ale, and ham, she sat herself down, again addressing her companion, as she threw her hat and gloves on a chair :—

“Now, Singleton, man, you’re dead beat, that’s clear ! Just drink that bottle of ale, and as much more as you can manage ; take a little ham ; have your bed warmed, for you look perished this fine June night, tumble in, and sleep to your heart’s content : we’ve plenty of time now we’ve lost them. Never mind if you do get a little bosky—you want a fillip ; and if you go to bed quietly and demurely, no one will be a bit the wiser, you know ! ”

Singleton followed her ladyship’s advice, drinking the strong ale as though it had been water ; and reviving under the effect of it, so far as to break silence by saying—

“I’m the most wretched man under the sun ! ”

“To be sure you are ; but it’s no use crying over spilt milk, so take a little more ale, and vanish. We won’t call you in the morning : no need for that *now*, you know, Singleton. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Beg your pardon, pon my life I do ! but I must have my joke though I lose my friend. There ! never mind fretting ; good night, and pleasant dreams to you ! ”

Singleton, dejected and angry, sought his room ; and, stretching himself out wearily in the soft warmth of the bed, the joint power of grief and fatigue soon put an end to the most miserable period of time he had ever passed in his life.

A clock on the staircase leisurely striking ten awoke Singleton. He stretched himself ; rubbed his eyes ; and then looked about him. He beheld a neat white-washed room, on the dimity curtain of which the warm sun was shining ; printing off on it in shade the leaden frame of the

lattice. A cock was loudly crowing ; a waggon heavily passing, the waggoner whistling drearily ; and a distant donkey braying with right good will.

With a rush, the events of the day before presented themselves to Singleton's mind. Ten o'clock ! That was the hour at which he was to have wed his Almeria, in the little church standing in the park at Drayton Court. He stretched himself out, stark as a corpse ; tearing his hair and grinding his teeth in his despair, till big tears ran down his cheeks, and he hid his eyes in the pillow from the bright light of day.

Envy and anger next agitated him, turning out grief for awhile. He painted to himself Brownlow and Rose standing before the communion rail in the little old church. He could see the happy faces of each of them ; the joy on Brownlow's brown and ruddy cheek, the fire of his bright hazel eye. He could see Rose modestly blushing and casting down her soft blue eyes, as she was wont to do when bashful. Singleton clenched his hands, striking his forehead with them ; cursing Brownlow and his bride ; their happiness and his own misery.

" They have no right to be happy when I am wretched : that fellow triumphs over me, no doubt ; and Rose does me the favour of pitying me ! " Thus raving at the mercy of his passions, Singleton lay until the clock again struck, slowly and sedately, with serene sound ; leaving a long vibration when the striking had ceased.

" By this time they are married ! By this time Almeria should have been mine ! "

With these words Singleton left his bed, but little inclined for the journey ; and still less for the " Dasher " and her boisterous modes.

How little did Richard Singleton know of the hearts of Brownlow and his bride ! No sooner had they heard of the

misery that had overtaken young Singleton, than they agreed with one accord that it would be wrong of them to be married, whilst their friend should be unhappy : on the very day, too, which should have been *his* wedding-day ; in the very church in which he was to have been married to Almeria. They decided, therefore, on putting off their happiness for a fortnight ; to be quietly married at the end of that time at Warton, without letting Singleton know the day on which their wedding was to take place.

These were the friends on whom in his wrath he had heaped curses and reproaches ; whilst they were delaying their own happiness, in order that the knowledge of that happiness might not add to his misery.

On learning of Almeria's elopement, Janet's first feeling was of joy without alloy. Singleton was again free ; Singleton loved her ; he might now realize all the happiness which his insidious, selfish wooing had taught her to dream of.

Brownlow had said that Richard's whole heart was Almeria's : that her faithlessness would be a heavy and a crushing blow to him.

These words clouded over the newly-found serenity of Janet's soul. How could Brownlow's words be made to agree with Singleton's conduct towards herself ? Was it possible that he could have changed in so short a time ? that he could have given Almeria the love he had made her believe was hers only ?

Janet was sorely perplexed. She called to mind the lovely summer days, when, from her lattice beneath the thatched roof of her home, she had many a time and oft beheld Singleton riding beside Almeria, whilst Lady Fotheringay and her son headed the cavalcade. Janet remembered well the beautiful face and glowing complexion of her rival ; she could in fancy behold Singleton leaning towards

her, conversing as they rode. She could hear Almeria's merry laugh; and her heart sank within her as of old, whilst she recalled the misery that was wont to possess her as the riders disappeared along the shady road; the ringing sound of the hoofs dying away, only a cloud of dust remaining awhile to tell that the cavalcade had passed.

If Singleton loved Almeria, then Janet's heart had no reason to be happy in the thought that his love had deserted him. The idea that Richard might then be suffering the agony and misery which she herself had so lately undergone, caused Janet's tender heart to die within her. Singleton unhappy! Janet would herself have borne any weight of grief, rather than know, or even think, that he was miserable. Janet's love, sorrows, and hopes, were all shut up within her own breast. In silence she had loved Richard; in silence she had hoped for happiness; in silence she had strengthened her soul to behold him give himself to Almeria: to see him place the ring on her finger; to hear him pronounce the words which would render her love for him a crime.

She silently pondered, now hoping, now despairing, knowing not what to think. Thus was her pure and gentle mind racked, through the workings of another mind, whose vanity and selfishness her own was too charitable and upright even to suspect. Singleton had so ordered his behaviour, that to Mrs. Adams he appeared to act towards Janet merely as an old friend should do; whilst he undermined her affections, glorying in his power and success, and causing a havoc, of which even his vanity did not know the extent.

When Singleton returned at early dawn from his trip to Gretna Green, he found his father and Lund about to retire to their beds.

Mr. Singleton, wrapped up in his own woes, barely



noticed the crushing his son had undergone; told him carelessly that no man could depend on a woman, they being all bad alike.

As for Lund, he received young Singleton with some very good acting; wringing his hand, murmuring "My dear fellow, my poor friend:" and loudly blowing his nose, pinching it at the same time, in order to give a proper moisture and redness to his eyes.

As this was the first instance of compassion which Singleton had met with under his grief, it greatly affected him, causing him to pity himself so violently that his heart was suddenly opened; and, laying his small, burning hand on Lund's shoulder, he grasped it, telling him that "he was the only friend he had in the world."

With a man who morbidly overvalues himself, a little praise, flattery, or devotion, will take much greater effect than with a man who sees himself in the proper light, and in his real relation to his fellow-creatures. So it was with Singleton, who, craving for praise, flattery, and devotion, and the rest of mankind being too busy, too careless, or too full of themselves, to give him what he yearned for, fell a ready prey to Mr. Matthew Lund's acting.

Singleton passed the day in bed, tired out and weary both in mind and body. Lund stole into his room from time to time, assisting him in pitying himself and in railing against the rest of the "heartless, cold world!"

A note arrived in the course of the day from Lady Fotheringay for Richard, informing him that Almeria and the "Bishop" had put them on a "wrong scent," having started for London, where they were married; and that they intended, after the honeymoon, to repair to Drayton, to throw themselves at the feet and on the mercy "of me and Sir T." So wrote the "Dasher."

Young Singleton sighed over this epistle.

"I feel I could murder *him* before her eyes," he cried bitterly.

Lund gave it as his opinion that Singleton could not do better than leave home for a time, and that change of scene would be "everything" for him.

"I shall never forget *her*, go where I will. I hate her, too, and yet I can't help loving her!"

"Cheer up!" cried Lund, stretching out his hand, in which Richard placed his. "I knew a man once who was pretty much in your plight, my dear Singleton: he was a remarkably proud and spirited fellow. What do you think he did?"

"What? Shot her? Shot himself, or what?"

Lund, after nodding and shaking his head, replied—

"No, no, no! None of that. He married the first pretty girl he met with, and it turned out admirably—admirably, upon my life. He adored *her*, and she worshipped *him*; and as for the lady who jilted him, she was so piqued at his conduct, that she took so terrible a dislike to her husband, and led him such a life, they were obliged to be separated."

Singleton, looking up, and appearing to be interested by his words, Lund continued—

"If a fellow don't dash on and do something of the sort, the girl looks down upon him; or fancies that he cannot get over his love for her; and that makes a man look small and mean, don't you see?"

Singleton having muttered something which had an approving sound, Lund went on to say, that it would be a thousand pities for a man of Richard's immense genius and vast acquirements to "swamp" himself for the sake of a woman; especially for one who could have the bad taste to prefer "such a scarecrow as Septimus Barnett," to such a handsome, "oriental-looking, interesting fellow" as Sin-

gleton: one whom all the women in London were ready to die for, and who would only have to choose to be accepted.

Lund's words acted as balm to Singleton's hurt vanity, although they failed to quench his passion for Almeria; that seeming to strengthen now that he had lost her for ever.

"Thank you, Lund," he cried, in pensive yet patronizing tones. "Your friendship is of the greatest value to me; I don't know what I should do without you, among all the selfish, coldhearted wretches one meets with in the world. You thoroughly understand me; and I don't believe there's another being on earth who does! You can go now; I shan't want you again till to-morrow."

"You over-value me, my dear Singleton, you do indeed! My humble friendship will always be at your service, unworthy as it is of such a mind as yours."

With these words, Mr. Lund retired to dress for dinner; to which well-served meal he did the fullest justice: it being a principle with him to eat and drink well at rich men's tables, in order to make up for the poor fare he battened on at other times.

Singleton was greatly surprised on the following day at receiving a visit from Brownlow. His rage bubbled up on beholding him; yet he felt somewhat ashamed on learning that his marriage with Rose had been put off out of good feeling towards himself.

Singleton, in his selfishness, could not have understood their conduct if it had been exercised towards anyone but himself; he, however, being the person concerned, it seemed to him to be perfectly natural; wherefore he felt no gratitude for the sacrifice, although his vanity was pleased by it.

Brownlow did all that his good manly heart dictated in order to console his friend. He told him not to be cast

down ; that he would have " better luck another time ; " and that it was waste of time to fret about a woman who could behave to him as Almeria had done. He pressed him, too, to pay him a visit in the autumn. " We'll do all we can to cheer you, my dear fellow. You shall shoot or not, just as you like ; have a sitting-room to yourself ; be your own master ; have a look at our country belles, and carry off whichever you choose. Cheer up ! and don't lose yourself, and make your life miserable because Miss Fotheringay is a jilt. Above all, though, don't marry in a hurry out of pique, as some poor fellows do : you would repent it as long as you live."

When Brownlow left, young Singleton felt towards him as he used to feel at school, when Brownlow protected him ; and as he felt at college, when he could not outdo him. He swore at what he called " Brownlow's infernally patronizing, conceited airs," hating him more bitterly than ever ; in his blindness throwing himself into Lund's snares, whilst he cast off his true, honest, and only friend.

To add to Singleton's misery, the weather just then set in wet. The rain fell steadily all day on grass, on leaves, on dripping flowers ; clearing off a little at sunset ; holding out a false hope that it would not return ; but there it was again at dawn, falling as straight and as steadily as ever.

It was a sad day for Richard when all the jewels he had given to Almeria, together with many other gifts, were sent back to him. The rain seemed to pour down harder, and the day to become more gloomy as he viewed them. Every one among them brought to his remembrance events which had once made him happy ; but the recollection of which now well nigh drove him to despair.

It was on a pouring wet day that Brownlow and Rose were married. They were too happy to care about weather ; but Mrs. Adams and Janet felt sad when Rose was gone.

The rain-drops dripped from the thatched roof, puddles standing in the hoof-marks of the horses that had whirled her off; whilst her canary was mute, hopping silently from perch to perch; and they taking off their wedding garments, sat down in their usual dresses, trying to busy themselves about their every-day pursuits.

Brownlow had insisted on their giving up "the College;" by which proceeding he took care that they should not be losers. There were, therefore, no children to distract their thoughts from Rose. Then the Warton bells burst out from time to time throughout the day in a roystering and uproarious manner, causing Mrs. Adams to say that she should never like bells again; though she was very glad her dear Rose was married to so worthy a man. Janet felt sad—very sad, yet she did her best to hide her feelings and to cheer her mother, that she might feel the loss of Rose as little as possible.

Poor Sylvester Evelyn heard the bells, the sound of which so depressed him, that he ordered out his mail-cart and drove over to a bachelor cleric, to dispel some part of his sorrow by dinner, and unlimited confidings at dessert as to the blighted state of his affections; how he could not "bring himself" to perform the wedding-service for Rose—and how utterly impossible he felt it to be that he should ever "rally."

The rainy south-west wind carried the sound of the bells far distant through the damp air. It smote on Singleton's ears, and he felt what it announced. His misfortune seemed double when he thought on Brownlow's happiness.



## CHAPTER XV.

## IMPIOUS DESPAIR.

ALL things come to an end in time; so did the rain. A brisk wind was driving the clouds away in large leaden-coloured masses, giving the bright blue heavens to view, and unveiling the cheering sun. Mr. Singleton's guests were sallying forth to taste the reviving air: birds were uproarious, dragging long wriggling worms from the moist earth: and moody Singleton was in his study writing a romance, in the composition of which he was trying to soften his woes. Mr. Goldup, humming "Cease your funning," *sotto voce*, was wending his way upstairs to the nabob's room, bearing a large kettle in one hand, a silver tea-tray, supporting a china tea-set for one, in the other. Mr. Goldup came to a pause in his song at the words, "Pleased to ruin"—and so entered his master's room with his usual noiseless agility, setting all things in order for the nabob's levee, and placing the tea-tray on a small table beside the bed.

"The tea's quite *draued*, sir, if you please," said Mr. Goldup debonnairely. Receiving no answer he proceeded to inspect his legs in the "Psyche," pointing his toe to bring out the calf, and putting his supporters into various other positions.

"Not fleshy, not stout, but *very* genteel; a great deal of blood displayed; something *very peer-ijied* about them—quite coronet star-and-garter legs, I protest!"

Having made these satisfactory reflections on his stork-like legs, Mr. Goldup again addressed his master.

"Beg *parding*, sir, but I'm afraid the tea'll *spile* if you don't drink it!"

No answer.

"Queerish!" thought Mr. Goldup, holding his breath to hear the better. Not a sound, save the singing of the kettle on the hob.

Mr. Goldup ventured to execute a little choking cough, and listened again with bated breath. Still the same silence.

The valet threw a brush to the ground.

"That'll wake him, I take it," thought Mr. Goldup, expecting a drawling reproof from his master. No such reproof came; wherefore the valet made bold to draw near to the bed, and gently putting the curtain on one side, peeped in.

Mr. Goldup gasped and started. He beheld Mr. Singleton lying on his back, his left arm thrown over his head, his mouth half open, his eyes likewise open, and the balls turned up. The valet touched him: he was dead and cold, looking white as the sheets, and horribly ghastly.

Mr. Goldup's knees smote each other; he let fall the curtain, and turned away. Quietly locking the door, he again drew near the bed, turning the bed-clothes cautiously down in order to feel his master's heart, and to make sure that he was really dead. He then proceeded to inspect Mr. Singleton's winnings of the night before, of which he put twenty guineas into his pockets; first of all examining the said pockets to be certain that they were sound and without holes. Mr. Goldup next slid up to the bureau, and unlocked it with a key which he well knew to be among those the nabob carried about him; he then pressed his long skeleton thumb on a spring, causing a drawer to fly open before him. Of this spring, of the drawer, and of its contents, Mr. Goldup had gained a knowledge through his habit of putting his eye and ear to keyholes.

In the drawer, on a soft bed of cotton, reposed unset

stones, precious, rich, and rare, in vast abundance. From amongst them, Mr. Goldup picked out three diamonds and a couple of emeralds; then disposing the rest, so that no gaps should appear among them, he shut drawer and bureau; tied up his booty in a corner of his handkerchief, deposited it in the breast-pocket of his coat, and unlocked the bed-room door. Mr. Goldup then withdrew the key, and locking the door on the outside, he slipped along, key in hand, to young Singleton's study.

"What the devil do you want *now*?" was the salutation the valet received from Richard, who was wrapped up in a description he was writing.

"Oh, sir! Oh, Mr. Richard, sir!"

"Well! what? What is it?"

"Oh, sir, you're an orphan!"

"What do you mean? Speak out!"

"My poor departed, lamented master's no more, sir!"

"Dead?"

"Dead, sir! Here's the key of his room, Mr. Richard, sir: I think you should come up and view immediately; and we ought to send off express for Dr. Blenkins and Mr. Small."

Richard, half stunned by Goldup's sudden announcement, followed him to Mr. Singleton's room.

Mr. Goldup stepped up to the bed on tiptoe, and put back the curtain.

Richard, making a violent effort, fixed his eyes on his father's face.

Trembling he turned away, and staggered to a chair; the ready valet quickly supplying him with ether; shaking his head lugubriously as he said:—"Uncommon ghastly spectacle, sir; but it's what we must all come to!"

Young Singleton, never having looked upon a dead man before, was filled with horror on beholding his father, and hurried trembling from the room.



“Very like that old fam’ly pictur as was burnt, sir,” whispered Mr. Goldup, locking the door, and giving the key to Richard.

It was agreed that Mr. Goldup should start off forthwith for the surgeon and the lawyer. “And you’ll excuse me, sir,” he said as he left Richard, “but I think we’d better make it public; the *publicker* those sudden deaths are made the better: candour disarms suspicion,” and so the valet informed Mr. Rumley and the maids of the demise of Mr. Singleton. On hearing of this event, Mr. Rumley’s red face became of a faint violet colour, whilst the maids gasped, shuddered, and vowed they could not go about after dark, unless Mr. Goldup or Mr. Rumley accompanied them.

Mr. Blenkins being duly summoned, together with Mr. Small, was the first to arrive, and being shown into young Singleton’s study, found him scared, nervous, and depressed.

“Have you seen him, sir?” inquired the surgeon, sitting down and folding his arms.

“Yes.”

“Well, and what do you think of it?”

“I don’t know.”

“I can’t account for sudden death! There was nothing about him to warrant it; nothing whatever. He’d cancer: but I can’t make out sudden death, sir.”

“Cancer? Had my father cancer?”

“To be sure he had; but he didn’t wish it known.”

Mr. Goldup now announced Mr. Small; whose pigtail was in a state of great vibration; and who seized both Richard’s hands, saying in a loud whisper, “Bless my soul! Bless my soul! Bless my soul! Sad, sad—very sad—all flesh is grass: but it’s awfully sudden.”

Richard, the surgeon, the lawyer, and Mr. Goldup repaired to the nabob’s room. Mr. Goldup, with a kind of

suppressed and reverential officiousness, drew back the curtain ; giving to view the ashy white face of his dead master.

Richard, turning away with a shudder, sat down with his back to the bed ; Mr. Blenkins pulling down the bed-clothes, as the valet had done before him.

Young Singleton started round on hearing several suppressed exclamations.

Beneath the bed-coverings was a sad and sorry sight. The sheets were crimson, dyed by the blood that had flowed from a deep wound just below Mr. Singleton's breast bone. The cold hand of the corpse had stiffened round the hilt of a long, curved, Eastern dagger, richly mounted in silver, and now soiled with blood. The hand rested on the body ; the sharp, taper point of the dagger being just within a broad wound which corresponded with the upper part of the blade.

Singleton, on beholding the blood, and the dark wound, turned dizzy, reeled, and fell fainting into the arms of the valet.

"Lay him on the floor, and loosen his things : he'll soon come to !" cried Mr. Blenkins ; adding to the lawyer, "Looks as if the nabob had made away with himself, sir, don't it ?"

"Yes !—Jury — coroner's inquest—sit on him — *post mortem*—course of wound—temporary insanity—*felo de se* ? no !—save the young man from *that* disaster—cross roads —stake through the body—shocking affair."

After pondering for a while, Mr. Blenkins whispered confidentially to Mr. Small—

"I shouldn't wonder, sir, but what he did it himself, through despair. You see he'd a bad internal disease, sir, and he had no more courage than a baby to face it. Deuced painful complaint ; and it got on very rapidly with

him. I've known cases of men killing themselves through fear of an operation ; and this is a kind of a parallel case. 'This is between you and me, sir ; don't let it go any further for the present.'" The surgeon was right. Mr. Singleton, shaken by disease—by pain ever growing from day to day—full of horror, fear, remorse, and infidelity, felt life to be a burden too heavy to bear. With impious and impatient hand he shed his blood ; dying full of rage and blaspheming discontent.

Two hours after the event became known to the rich man's guests, not one of them remained beneath his roof.

Evening came on, cool and calm ; then night, with her silence and her stars. The corpse lay on the bed, in the same position in which it died ; with the same horrorized yet defying expression of face. The bed-chambers of the departed visitors were dark and empty ; the drawing-room, so brilliantly lighted, so full the night before, was deserted and dreary. Silence, dead and heavy, reigned throughout the vast mansion where so impious a crime had been committed.

Young Singleton retired to his bed shaken and appalled. The sight he had that day beheld chased away love-sorrows for a time ; but Singleton felt no grief for his father's death ; no sorrow for his loss.

The rich man, the man of pleasure, departed without one heart on earth to mourn for him ; without one tear being shed for him ; without one sigh being given to his memory.

Thus died that man whose whole care during life had been the pampering of his body ; the finding pleasures for it—making it to fare daintily ; giving it the king's place, whilst his soul was but its serf. When the body became sick ; no longer able to taste delights ; full of pain, and hastening to the grave ; then the soul was found to be wanting : unable to bring comfort, or courage, or hope, to the man of pleasure.

Man of pleasure ? He should have been called, man of pain ! Such men are killing their bodies by the very pleasures they delight them with ; the present all their care ; the black future hidden from their view. When men are full of meat and wine, glorying in ill living, they think not of evil days to come. Can they believe, even if prayed to turn their thoughts that way, that they must one day lie sick and sad, peevish and full of fear, on the bed of death ; without repentance, still clinging to their dregs of life ; full of petty cares as to sweetening those bitter dregs : or, unable to bear their weight of woe, the consequences of their life of *pleasure*, rushing madly from their short remnant of time to an eternity of agony and despair. They band together for jollity and joy ; one by one they drop off into the gloom of their sick room. Those who are yet well and merry, and excited, hear that such a one is dead—“ Poor fellow ! ” say they ; but they lay not the warning to heart.

Young Singleton, dreary and solitary, for Lund had returned for awhile to his own home, sat leaning his head on his hand, and musing on many matters. He heard the soft tramp of the jurymen, stealing stealthily past his door, wending their way upstairs to view the bloody, clay-cold body of the man of pleasure, lying on the silk-curtained bed in the midst of the luxuries which had become necessities to him. Anon arrived the surgeon and his assistant. They too went into the rich man's room, and Mr. Goldup went with them ; and there was a sound of opening and shutting of doors. Then all was quiet for a long while ; Richard shivering with horror as he sat alone with his thoughts.

In due time Mr. Blenkins appeared before him.

“ Good morning, Mr. Richard, sir ! You'll be called on presently to give evidence ; and don't you let any foolish feeling lead you to prove your father was in his right mind.

Do you understand? We must have it brought in 'temporary insanity'—'*felo de se*' would never do."

"Thank you."

"We've made the *post mortem*. The dagger passed up under the sternum right through the heart: very cleverly done, faith! He seems to have been in the act of pulling out the weapon when he died. It's all as clear as day: no one but himself *could* have stabbed him in that way."

Mr. Goldup was the first witness examined; being very much excited, and delighted at the part he was called upon to play.

Richard having given his evidence, retreated to his room.

Mr. Blenkins was short and pithy: Mr. Small clever and cautious under his hubble-bubble manner.

"Temp'ry insanity, Mr. Richard, sir!" cried Mr. Goldup, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, as he flew into young Singleton's presence; the inquest being over.

"It's uncommon satisfactory, to be sure, to all concerned; and I humbly beg leave to congratulate you, and all of us, sir, on the issue!"

On the following night, a moonless night, dimly lighted by the blinking stars, a hearse with four horses slowly drew up at the door of Singleton Hall. The horses looked spectral, as they tossed their heads and feathers in the gloom; champing their bits, and pawing the gravel with their broad hoofs. Several men entered the Hall; lights were seen passing from window to window; stopping at that of Mr. Singleton's room. After a while they were once more seen, as window after window became light, then again dark. Then through the hall slowly passed four men carrying a heavy weight on their shoulders; the coffin containing all that remained on earth of the happy (?) man of pleasure—the blanched bloodless corpse, arrayed in the shroud **that**

covered the dissection-marks beneath it. The hall door was quietly opened ; the four men descended the steps ; the coffin was pushed into the hearse, and noiselessly shut in. The four nodding horses stepped off slowly, their heavy velvet mantles blown about by the night breeze ; which, sighing through the trees, seemed to wail over the lost soul of the departed.

A mourning-coach containing Mahomet, the surgeon, the lawyer, and Mr. Goldup, followed the hearse. Young Singleton was too much shaken in mind and body to attend his father's remains to the grave. He had heard the hearse draw near and stop ; he had heard footsteps, and the cautious opening and shutting of doors ; he had heard the hearse slowly departing ; and the sweat started from every pore as he breathlessly listened.

Singleton heard the two servants return to the house. He knew that his father slept among his luckless ancestors in the family vault.

The following morning Mr. Small called on Singleton ; informing him that about a week before, the nabob had, in his presence, and in that of his clerk, burnt his will, without giving any reasons for so doing ; merely saying that there was no other document of the kind in existence as regarded him, and that his son would be his sole heir.

Thus Richard became possessor of Singleton Hall ; large estates and vast property. He ground his teeth angrily, and then sighed, as he thought how happy he should have been to have laid all his wealth at the feet of Almeria.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## MAHOMET.

YOUNG Singleton, the rich heir, sat alone the evening after the funeral; trying by reading to divert his thoughts from other matters. A slight sound drew him from his book; he looked up and beheld Mahomet smiling a sinister smile beside him.

Singleton starting, asked him why he stood there? Mahomet replying that he came to him on business, seated himself with an air of authority.

"You insolent scoundrel, what are you about?" cried Singleton, half choked with rage and offended dignity.

"*Ba-ad* words, *sare*, *ba-ad* words!" cried Mahomet, shaking his two forefingers backwards and forwards—"ah! very *ba-ad*!"

"Leave the room directly, you rascal!"

"*Starp* a little, *Mistare* Richard: where is your *fa-a*-ther's will?"

"What the devil is that to you, you impertinent fellow? are you drunk?"

Mahomet shook his head in reply; informing Richard that he had seen the nabob's will; that the nabob had himself shown it to him; and that he was down in it for an annuity of five hundred pounds to be paid to him quarterly.

"My father burnt his will a short time before his death. Go to Mr. Small; he will tell you all about it; and now leave the room!"

Mahomet sat still, silently fixing his snake's eyes on Singleton, who returned his stare without flinching.

"Well?"

“I must *ha-ave* my money, *sare* : you must pay me ; just and *prarper* !”

“Not a farthing do you get from me, for your insolence.”

“Ah ! but you are in my power : so was your *fa-a-ther* !”

“In your power ? I’m not to be frightened by those sort of stories !”

Mahomet, smiling his sinister smile, said—

“Your *fa-a-ther* was a murderer ; a poisoner. I know many things ; I can speak and bring you to *sha-ame* : to be pointed at, *sare* ! Your *fa-a-ther* murdered his children !”

Singleton turned pale, faintly asking Mahomet what he meant.

“Ah ! ah ! it is well. Will you pay me just and *prarper* ! I know about your mother : I saw her die, *sare*.”

“Did you ? What about her ? Who was she ? tell me quickly !” cried Singleton, throwing down his book ; folding his arms and resting them on the table, as he stretched out his head, eager to catch Mahomet’s words.

Mahomet smiled ; telling Singleton that he must prepare to lose all good opinion of his father after hearing what he had to reveal.

“Speak ! I don’t want any of your observations. Begin !”

“*Sare*, I will obey.” So saying, Mahomet, drawing his chair to the table, leant his elbow on it, and began his tale.

The Indian poured such deeds of horror into Singleton’s ear—deeds so direful, so remorseless, and so devilish, that his heart sickened and trembled within him as he listened. He shuddered and turned pale as he reflected that it was *his* father who had committed the iniquities set forth by Mahomet.

“I don’t want to hear any more of *that*,” he cried : “tell me about my mother !”

Before Mahomet fulfilled the young man’s request, with sham obsequiousness and the expression of a devil in his dark face, he begged leave to point out to Singleton that he



had it in his power to make these revelations public, and that Richard had better allow him five hundred a year to save his father's memory from becoming even more despised than suicide could make it—himself from being pointed at as the son of such a father.

Singleton, feeling that Mahomet was coercing him, and that Mahomet had him in his power, winced beneath his words, and beneath his snake's eyes, with their cunning look and their red gleam. The idea of being in the power of any human being, roused all Richard's anger.

"Tell me about my mother!" he cried wrathfully.

"Bettare pay me, *sare*; much *bettare*. You are weak—I am strong; because I know *ma-a-ny* secret things."

"I'm not to be frightened into *any* thing. Go on!"

Mahomet arose, and making an ostentatious salaam, prepared to depart.

"Stay!" cried Richard, seizing him by the sleeve of his tunic.

Mahomet stood still; but he informed young Singleton that he had made up his mind not to speak one word concerning Richard's mother until he should promise to pay the annuity, and give up to him the nabob's collection of unset stones.

Singleton arose from his seat and paced to and fro, his mind tossed by anger, fear, and hatred. He felt that he was completely in the hands of Mahomet; and that pay him the annuity he needs must. It was no love of money that caused him to hold back—for money he cared but little; it was the yielding to any one on earth—the being ridden by a servant—at which he revolted. He inwardly cursed his father—the father whose misdeeds were falling on *his* head. As Singleton walked backwards and forwards, frowning and biting his lips in his wrath, Mahomet with downcast eyes, one hand in his sash, the other in the bosom of his tunic, stood patiently by, as still and silent as a statue.

“ You shall have what you want if you will promise to go back to your own country and never let me see your face again,” cried Singleton, still walking to and fro.

“ *Va-a-ry good, sare !* ”

“ Now, then, go on with your story and make haste ! ”

But Mahomet refused to speak until Singleton should promise to give him a writing, properly drawn up by Mr. Small, and duly witnessed, whereby he should bind himself to pay the annuity during Mahomet's life; and that in the event of Richard's death, it should be paid by his heirs.

“ Will not the word of a gentleman content you, you black scoundrel ? ” shouted Singleton.

Mahomet shook his forefinger, observing that the word of a gentleman was all very well, but that in matters of business it was far better to have “ *prarper* ” papers, duly witnessed.

Singleton, finding himself obliged to succumb, swore at Mahomet, and ordered him to leave the room; himself pacing about the greater part of the night in a stormy frame of mind.

New subjects of disquiet were added to his sorrow for the loss of Almeria. His vanity feared lest the scorn of the world should be raised by his father's death, visiting that death on him, innocent though he was of it. His pride revolted against the idea of being, through his father's crimes and selfishness, in the power of Mahomet, whose rule over him called forth his blackest hatred. He made many reflections on the folly that a man is guilty of who gives way to his passions; little wotting how entirely he was a slave to his own, although they were different in kind to his father's. He moralized, too, on the iniquity of the nabob in destroying his will, and thus leaving him a prey to Mahomet; who would, he feared, not stop at the annuity, but levy still larger sums from him.

He pondered on his father's neglect of him ; on the manner in which he had allowed his childhood and boyhood to pass, not even caring for him as he came to man's estate.

" Ah ! he was wrapped up in himself alone ; he was a cold egotist, caring only for his own pleasures ; neglecting me—not doing his duty by me. He has left me to be pointed at, maybe, for *his* deed ; to be ruled over by the villain who helped him in his sins, and who has the audacity to tell me that my father was a murderer ! I wonder that any man could be so selfish, so hard-hearted, so led by passion as my father was ! "

Thus pondered the passion-led, selfish son of a passion-led, selfish sire.

Singleton lost no time in having the document required by Mahomet duly drawn up by Mr. Small ; witnessed, signed, and put into the Indian's possession. Richard then bade him tell all he knew concerning his mother.

The substance of what Mahomet related was as follows:—

Shortly after the death of his first wife, Mr. Singleton, returning in the cool of morning from a country ride, espied a Hindoo girl, some seventeen years of age, sitting beneath a tree, playing and laughing with a little Hindoo boy her brother. Mr. Singleton saw that she was beautiful ; wherefore, drawing bridle, he stopped and watched her gambols, until the boy perceiving him, pointed him out to the girl.

The nabob rode off without speaking a word to either ; but morning after morning he passed the same spot ; and morning after morning he beheld the girl with her brother, until a fierce flame for her burnt within his breast.

Mahomet was instructed to carry her off to the nabob's lone country house ; and there to keep her in safety until his master should arrive.

The nabob, like Harry VIII., when he loved, chose to marry ; opining that the absolute power which the law

gives a man over his wife was the best power to hold where love was concerned. He therefore made love to his prisoner (for prisoner the girl was) with a view to espousing her secretly, and keeping her well watched in the large, solitary house.

There was great turmoil among her kin when she disappeared. Mahomet placed her clothes beside the river, where they were found. After a time her relations subsided into quiet and grief, supposing that she had bathed at early dawn, and that the current had been too strong for her. There was great search made for her body, which they found not; yet they one and all mourned her as dead.

When Richard was born, the nabob looked on him with favour. He was such an odd little being, with his immense black eyes, and his dark skin, that his father, contrary to his murderous wont, spared his life; much as a man would save a puppy he might take a fancy to, from among a litter condemned to death.

For two whole years, Mr. Singleton lived lovingly, after his fashion, with the Hindoo. At the end of that time he went through his usual process; that is, he first got tired of her, and then hated her; losing his heart at the same time to a lovely young English girl just come out, on whose cheeks the roses had not had time to abdicate, leaving the lilies to reign alone.

As did King Harry, so did Mr. Singleton; got rid of his old love, that his new love might step into her place. One night as the Hindoo slept the heavy sleep into which a narcotic taken in coffee, and therein put by Mahomet, had thrown her, Mahomet was abroad in a wood at the back of the house; the bright moon lighting him to his evil work, as he stood watching on a clear space surrounded by trees. Across this space from time to time a wriggling snake would pass; disappearing, rustling in the thicket; breaking the dry

branches as it went. From the limb of a tree near the Indian, a cobra uncoiled itself, dropping and making its way slowly across the open ground.

Mahomet knelt beside it ; passed his left hand round it about the middle, seizing the tail with the other, and drawing the snake rapidly through his hand, until he grasped it with a strong firm grasp round the throat. It was in vain that the serpent tried to fasten on Mahomet's throttling hand ; just above which its angry head appeared : in vain it opened its jaws, setting up the murderous fang ; its eyes flashing with a red and lurid light.

Mahomet with agile tread sped away with the struggling cobra : keeping in shade as he hied along. He reached the verandah, on which opened the French windows of the room in which Mr. Singleton, anxious and listening, awaited him. Mahomet crept softly into the chamber : not a word was spoken. He stood beside the bed : his master opened the light curtain ; then, baring the innocent breast of the woman who slept there, nodded to Mahomet, who placed the gaping mouth of the snake upon the soft brown bosom. He slightly loosened his hold, and allowed the angry reptile to fix his venomous fang in the Hindoo girl's warm flesh. The wound, small but fatal, was given ; the victim moved in her sleep, but awoke not. Mahomet, again grasping the cobra, fled as quickly and noiselessly as he had come.

In recounting the above horrors, Mahomet was careful to represent himself to Richard as a spectator only. He fixed his own deeds on a fabulous native servant, by him affirmed to have lately died in India. He added in conclusion :—

“Your *mar-ther* soon died, sare ! You would not like all the *wa-arld* to know that ; to know how your father's children *we-ent* to *da-ath*.”

“You scoundrel, she was murdered !” roared Singleton, fiercely shaking Mahomet.

“Your *fa-ather* ar-dered it—let me go, *sare*. You are *va-ary* like your *mar-ther*; that is why my *marster* did not *lurve* you.”

So saying, Mahomet, having been loosened by Singleton, was preparing to go on with the life and deeds of the nabob. Richard told him to be silent, to depart as soon as possible, and never more to appear before him.

It was small wonder that Mr. Singleton, when he found that he must die, could not endure to look upon Mahomet. He brought such dark doings to his remembrance, that the nabob's soul quaked at the very sound of his grating voice.

Richard, having got rid of the Indian, seemed to breathe more freely; though he still felt that he was in his power: his spirit darkening whenever the thought came before him.

Mr. Rumley, the footmen, and the maids, gave warning in a body, stating that they wished to leave immediately, and giving as a reason that they had “heard noises.”

“What do they mean by ‘noises’?” inquired Singleton sharply of Mr. Goldup, who acted as their spokesman.

“Why, sir, they are but a weak-minded lot; I should have expected something better from Mr. Rumley, at his age too!”

“Well! but what do they mean?”

“You'll excuse my naming it, sir, but you see—in fact—my late lamented master's bedchamber is the scene of the noises they state they have heard. They vow they hear a something heavy fall every night; and the upper housemaid declares that all the soap in the universe would never wash out the blood marks under the bed.”

“Rubbish! Pack them all off; the sooner they go the better. Tell them not to talk all that nonsense out of the house—do you hear?”

“ Very good, sir ! ”

The caution came too late. Through the servants' fears and talking, another ghost, that of Mr. Singleton, was added to the spectres that had already been seen at Singleton Hall

Richard, for the first time in his life, was called upon to attend to matters of business ; Mr. Small wishing him to become thoroughly acquainted with everything relating to his property, his father having added many miles of land to the old family estates.

Young Singleton had no talent for business : he scarcely listened to the lawyer's explanations ; dreaming of Almeria, of his mother, of poetic and romantic things. Mr. Small, honest, energetic, and patient, tried in vain to make him take an interest in what he said.

“ I tell you what,” cried Richard one day, wearied by several hours' business with Mr. Small, “ this is all a bore, Mr. Small ! I wish you would manage business as you did in my father's time. You understand it, and I don't ; just see that I get my income regularly paid, and take your own course about the rest. I thoroughly trust *you* ; so never let me hear another word about business : it tires me to death, and I hate it all.”

It was in vain that Mr. Small remonstrated ; young Singleton would not attend to business. Lucky for him it was that the lawyer was an honest man, with a friendship for him which had sprung out of Mr. Small's early acquaintance with him, when he was a dark little boy in pea-green skeletons.

The lawyer pitied him too, thinking it a shocking thing that a man should apply his talents to “ poetry stuff,” when he had such a fine field for business as was afforded by the management of the Singleton estates.

Richard had received a visit of condolence from the

“Dasher,” who, arriving at the Hall on horseback, had made her entry into his study, the tail of her habit tucked under her arm, switching her shins with her smart riding-whip. As may be supposed, she rattled away, riding roughshod over young Singleton’s sensibilities ; all with a view to cheering him, and “bringing him to.”

“I suppose,” she said, “you’ve heard the Barnetts are with us. We’ve forgiven the ‘Bishop,’ and Merry too. How they *did* laugh at our trip to Gretna Green ! it was great sport, wasn’t it. Faith ! I never enjoyed anything more ! Oh ! and how they roared at my description of Pepper’s attack on you, and all that. Merry’s *monsus* afraid of meeting you ; and rather ashamed of her behaviour to you : though she says that everything’s fair in love and war. She hopes you won’t wear the willow on *her* account : rather pert and conceited of her, isn’t it now ? ”

The “Dasher’s ” visit roused Singleton’s wrath, and a firm resolve to marry the first pretty girl he met with.

He had received condoling letters from Lund and Brownlow, and also from his old tutor, Dr. Savory. The Doctor forgave him his conduct at college, in consideration of his poems, which the Doctor greatly lauded ; appearing to take their arrival at the second edition they had just reached as a personal compliment to himself.

From Brownlow he received a kind, warm-hearted invitation to go and stay with him. This invitation moved Singleton’s ire ; he threw the letter containing it angrily on the table, saying—

“Devilish patronizing ! How I *do* hate that conceited prig ! ”

Lund’s epistle was truckling, and affectedly humble. He offered to fly to Singleton if he could be of any comfort or use to him, saying, that if Richard thought that a thorough change would be of any service to him, Lund’s father and



family would be proud to see him beneath their "humble roof."

"We are poor and homely," wrote Mr. Mat Lund, "but we are warm-hearted and true, my dear Singleton. My old father and my dear sisters would vie with me in trying to console one who has been so kind to such an unworthy dog as I am."

Singleton, anxious to leave for awile the scene of his late misfortunes, wrote a condescendingly affectionate letter to Lund, in which he accepted his invitation.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LUNDS.

OLD Lund, the father of Mat, was a tall, large man, with a loud voice, a red face, and a fat stomach. A retired merchant captain was he ; a widower, dwelling with his family in a small house nestled in a hollow of the downs near Brighton, in which town he daily appeared at the reading-rooms ; "sweeping" the horizon with a telescope, or lounging on the Steyne and cliffs.

Being a man of a convivial turn—one who could "sing a good song"—he was at great request at men's dinner-parties, as well as at the mess tables of the infantry and cavalry regiments which were, in those days, quartered at Brighton.

This suited Captain Lund well, he being a gourmand of the first water, loving rich dishes and good wine ; and finding neither in his own home, was glad to become a buffoon in the service of his capacious stomach.

That same stomach was his god. For that he sang—

for that he joked; to fill that with dainty fare was the labour of his life. For the sake of pampering that dear stomach, he bore the pangs of gout, and the slavery of dancing attendance on those who could furnish it with the fare it loved so well.

There were four Miss Lunds dwelling among the downs in the home of their father. Catherine, the eldest, an old maid of forty, was lean and sandy, like her brother Mat; with a temper not much improved by finding herself cast on the bleak shore of single blessedness. Hannah, ten years her junior, was fat and jovial, loving good cheer, and caring very little whether she married or not.

Next came Sarah, a damsel of five-and-twenty, of a sentimental character, with a vocation for the belles-lettres.

Theresa was the youngest; rather pretty, having a fresh complexion, and light curling hair. She affected a juvenility greater even than was warranted by her age; she being eighteen with the modes of a child.

Mat Lund made no secret with his family as to his designs on young Singleton. He pointed out the immense advantage Theresa's alliance with him would be to them all; how he would "get them on in life;" and what a pity it would be if his sister should let him "slip through her fingers."

Miss Sarah made a few difficulties about the path her brother had traced out for Theresa; deeming that *she*, the literary one of the Lund tribe, should walk in that path arm-in-arm with Singleton.

"Nonsense, Sarah!" cried Lund, tossing his head. "Don't you go and spoil the broth! *You* would never catch him. He don't want a reading and writing rival, you know; he hates blue-stockings, and so do all men. It's all very well your talking about beauty of mind;

beauty of mind never caught a fellow yet, and never will, as long as the world lasts ! Bless your soul ; a pretty face will do more in five minutes than all your reading of thick volumes and chopping of logic could accomplish in a century. Men don't want to fall down and worship Minerva, I can tell you ; they prefer Venus. Why, if they want learning and a strong mind, literary criticism and Attic salt, they can find all that in their own sex, far better than in yours : they'd just as soon have their love, or their wife, in leathers and tops, riding post, as dabbling in learning ; wrinkling their foreheads, and making themselves as ugly as the devil ! You be quiet, Sarah, and mind your books ; and don't give your mind to love and marriage : they were never meant for blue-stockings ! ”

Miss Sarah flounced much, as Lund uttered the above home truths, giving vent to her feelings by stalking out of the room, loudly banging the door ; Lund calling after her, “ Exit Minerva in a rage ! ”

Old Lund being no less anxious than was his son to partake of all the benefits to be obtained through Singleton, laid in a small stock of good wine ; because he opined that a “ youngster ” under the influence of port and champagne would be more supple in the hands of the Lund family, than if allowed to remain temperate and cool.

On young Singleton's arrival he received a most hearty welcome from the Lunds.

The Captain, taking Richard's hand between his own fat and burning ones, there retained it, saying in his loudest and most good-fellow-like voice—

“ My dear young man, how kind of you ! How kind of you ! I've long wished to make your acquaintance, and to thank you for all your friendship and goodness to Mat, unworthy dog as he is. I can't thank you, though, I can't ; it's no use trying ! I'm a rough old tar, an honest fellow, sir,

with his heart in the right place, damme ; but a regular rough-and-ready one, d'ye see, and not given to *parlyvooring*. When I say, thank you, my boy ! I mean what I say. Come, Mat ! come, girls ! bear a hand, and show our young friend round ; that'll pass the time till dinner is on the table. What are you blushing about, Isabelle, you *timid* little thing ? Come, put on your *trucks*, girls, and be off all of you for a walk ! ”

Captain Lund's address to Isabelle caused Richard to look on *her*, Theresa ! she having been decked with the name of Isabelle because the heroine of Singleton's romance was so called. Richard was charmed to find any one so pretty as Theresa beneath his friend's roof ; ugliness being in his mind ever connected with Lund and all belonging to him.

During the walk, Isabelle spoke but little ; although she blushed and smiled much : especially when addressed by young Singleton.

Before the Lunds and their guest retired to their beds, Richard, made happy by champagne, flattery, and obsequious listening from all to his egotistical discoursing, inwardly declared the whole family to be very agreeable, the house very comfortable, the Captain a friendly old fellow he felt he could trust to, and Isabelle a *very* pretty girl, captivating in her wild shyness ; and “ falling in love with *me* ; that is visible enough ! ”

This “ falling in love with *me* ” on the part of Isabelle served to raise young Singleton's spirits. He little wotted that Mat Lund was her prompter, and that he, Richard, was walking hoodwinked towards a pit-fall. He took great delight in drawing out the timid Isabelle, and in making love to her in his most fascinating manner.

At the end of a fortnight's stay with his friend, young Singleton found the house and its dwellers so agreeable.

that he declared he should never be able to leave them. The Captain laid his hand with paternal grasp on the young man's shoulder, in reply, saying :

"Come, come, my good friend, toe the line ! toe the line ! you *must* be joking ! You can't really like our poor little craft, after the grand first-rate you command. It's very kind of you to say you do : very kind indeed !"

While young Singleton had been engaged to Almeria, he had not been "made much of" at Drayton Court. Sir Theophilus was kind and civil to him, as he was to all ; the "Dasher" behaved towards him with rough and manly modes ; young Fotheringay got out of his way ; Tommy did not care about him ; Pepper and Syntax hated him openly ; and Almeria jilted him.

At the Lunds' he was pampered as he had never before been. He was made a demi-god of, and worshipped by his entertainers with such seeming candour and frankness that he felt supremely contented and happy.

"The Lunds understand me—they thoroughly appreciate me ; which the greater part of the stupid world does not. People generally are so matter-of-fact, and so selfishly wrapped up in themselves, that they have no eyes for others. It is far otherwise with the Lunds : *they* are not cold hearted, neither are they selfish ! They like to listen to me, and look interested too. I'm sure old Lund has quite a paternal feeling towards me ; in short, I know that they are all very fond of me. As for poor little Isabelle, she's deucedly in love with me ; and I don't wonder at it : I don't suppose she ever was wooed as I can woo ; very different from the love-making of that great gawky young squire. As if such a Sussex hawbuck could hope to have any chance where *I* am concerned. I begin to suspect I threw myself away on Almeria ; she did not understand me : I was too good for a woman who could run away with that

grinning parson; too much above her: I really don't think she had soul enough to feel my value. Isabelle shrinks if I do but look at her; trembles if I touch her hand: Almeria never did! Isabelle drinks in every word as I read my romance to her; weeps too; seems to see but *me* in the world! She is very pretty; just the wife for me; so devoted: I'll have her; I'll cut out the Sussex hawbuck, and those cavalry fellows who come dangling over here, smelling of brass and Russia leather. I was cut out by the parson and Brownlow; I'll show them I'm not to be despised; they shall see what I can do: Almeria shall find out that she is not the only pretty woman in the world!"

The above ideas passed through young Singleton's mind concerning himself and others.

A month passed pleasantly away. There were long strolling walks taken over the downs by Lund and Singleton, accompanied by Isabelle and Hannah. Singleton ever walked by Isabelle; waxing poetic as he pointed out the distant sea and bade Theresa watch the cloud-racks, as those mighty shadows scudded over the round hills and deep vales. Then, too, they drove into Brighton; Richard having quartered Mr. Goldup, his groom, the phaeton and horses, at a little inn but a short distance from the Lunds'.

When first Singleton and his turn-out appeared on the cliffs, he was taken for one of "the Prince's people." In due time it was discovered that he was staying with the Lunds; at which people opened their eyes; and after divers gossiping inquiries, gave him the name of "the Lunds' young nabob."

In those days Brighton was a most uncockneyfied place; a little town without suburbs; the "heart of the city" being in "the bosom of the country." A cottage near Marlborough House was then the Prince's villa; those congeries of onions and extinguishers, the Pavilion, not being

reared till several years later. St. Peter's Church was not: the ground on which it stands was the northern end of the town. It once a year supported booths, wild-beast shows, upside-downs, and merry-go-rounds, when to the delight of great and small a fair took place.

The Chalybeate then stood in the country; so did the almshouses. There was no Chain Pier; neither were there any grand hotels, nor a Kemp Town, nor any splendid dwellings.

To the east the town broke off at *the* Crescent; to the west it stretched its infant arm but a little way. The Steyne had no bronze statue, no iron railings: hurdles fenced off the grass, and fishing-nets hung upon them to dry.

Then it was pleasant to stand of an evening among the few grave-stones in the old burying-ground of St. Nicholas' Church; and to watch the sun setting blood-red in the sea, at the end of the long path of light he shed upon it; no smoke hanging about to dim the calm and soothing spectacle; no din of carriages to be heard to disturb the quiet of the peaceful churchyard.

White sails too might be seen, as vessels sailed slowly along on the serene sea; no steamers being there to dash and paddle with long and smoky tail. The windmill on the hill swung its arms lazily round and round; looking down on fond lovers as they took their evening stroll beneath it, among the pleasant green meads and fields of waving golden corn. Then, too, the downs were visible, unladen by buildings; downs to be reached in five minutes, with their soft turf and sweet-smelling thyme, whereon the sheep fed happily; as many a sky-lark sang and fluttered above them in the clear and healthy air.

Fishermen in those days would, all of a row, lean their backs against a wall on the west cliff, smoking long clay pipes, as they watched their boats drawn up on the beach

below them ; boats looking like the Grecian fleet in the time of the Trojan war—as Richard observed to Miss Isabelle. Sometimes a quarrel would spring up among these Tritons clad in blue. Anon they would repair to the beach, fling off jacket, waistcoat, and shirt ; and thus, in their tight knee-breeches and gray stockings, shake hands and “fight it out,” with many a sounding blow on their sturdy breasts. Their allies stood in a circle to see fair play, and the restoration of peace and friendship after a becoming number of “rounds.”

Such British fights being deemed “brutal and barbarous,” have long since been put down ; and with them the rough chivalry which taught “the people” that it was unmanly “to strike a woman ;” and the honest generosity which said it was cowardly “to hit a man when he’s down.”

Unfortunately, banishing boxing has not done away with angry passions ; these must ever reign, so long as the prince of this world holds sway over it. The descendants of the “beer-drinking Britons” who never “gave in ;” the men who deemed that one Englishman was equal to three Frenchmen : the sturdy beings who shook hands before they fought, and fought coolly and before witnesses, standing up man to man : their spirit-drinking, enlightened, penny-trash reading, wife-beating descendants, have passions more pettishly angry and violent than those of their cool forefathers, and *they* vent them by a treacherous and bloody stab. How will the next generation settle *their* quarrels ?

Singleton took great delight in driving about the town and cliffs ; in seeing himself and his phaeton and horses stared at. He liked, moreover, to lounge at the libraries, there to hear it whispered that *he* was Mr. Singleton the poet ; author of the charming volume which had so soon reached a second edition. He largely patronized the “Theatre Royal ;” appearing in the stage-box once or twice



a week—a bright planet, with attendant Lunds as satellites. He indulged himself in a “bespeak” on a large scale; having a “star” from London at his own expense. With this “star” he was to be seen arm-in-arm parading the Steyne during band-playing time; the poet and the actor attracting immense attention, to the infinite delight of young Singleton, who then began to entertain thoughts of one day appearing on the boards. His imagination painted in strong colours the pleasure of taking up the whole attention of a house full of people; all listening breathlessly, their eyes fixed on *him*; whilst *he*, splendidly dressed, gave forth beautiful pieces of eloquence, bringing down thunders of applause; ladies falling martyrs to *him*, and *his* name becoming famous throughout the length and breadth of the land. The “star,” like an honest man, threw cold water on Singleton’s scheme; telling him that a gentleman-actor never succeeded, except in making himself ridiculous, and in filling the manager’s pockets by the novelty of a first appearance.

In consequence of this plain speaking on the part of the “star,” Richard began to take a dislike to him; putting down his advice to envy. Young Singleton felt perfectly certain that *he* could act as well as the “star” himself.

No sooner had the “bespeak” gone off with the greatest success, and the “star” had taken his departure on the top of the coach, than young Singleton asked the manager of the “Theatre Royal” what was *his* opinion, as to his idea of appearing on the stage.

Mr. Thomas Charles Sadler, commonly called T. C. Sadler, asked nothing better than to see “the Lunds’ young nabob” on his boards. A character so well known on the Brighton promenades would be sure to make a “hit.” Even if he failed, his failure would not take place until tickets were taken and money lodged; wherefore T. C. Sadler

urged the vain young man gaily on, smoothing all difficulties, and bargaining that Richard should be at all the extra expense which his appearance might entail. The Lunds, too, applauded his plans; they felt that to do otherwise would utterly ruin their great design.

The next thing was to fix on a play which should contain a character of which young Singleton approved. Romance writing was for a time set aside. He read play after play aloud, surrounded by the Lund family in conclave; all listening, and feigning unlimited interest.

Just at this period, Mat Lund, seeing that Singleton's heart felt the proper degree of love for Theresa, thought the time had come for "clenching matters."

Young Singleton had passed a restless night, going over play after play in his mind: imagining how *he* should look in the chief character of each; how *he* should dress; and what the public would think of him. In consequence of this pleasing excitement of thought, he awoke somewhat late in the morning.

On appearing, he found that his entertainers had, according to his desire, began breakfast.

"Good morning!" he cried, graciously waving his hand to the assembled company, and taking his seat: "I've settled to appear as the Duke in the 'Honeymoon.' Everyone makes his first appearance as Romeo, that wouldn't do. There's 'Douglas': it's a capital dress, but I'm too dark for the character. I thought of the 'Iron Chest,' but Sir Edmund Mortimer's costume is dull and heavy. 'Othello's' too old, or I should have liked to come on in a turban; and I feel I could have played jealousy to the life. The Duke's just the thing: plenty to do, and such a fine scope for dress; then my complexion is just the thing for a Spanish grandee; and with a pair of moustaches well corked, and a touch of carmine on the cheek, I'm sure I shall make a hit:

I feel quite certain of it; and so I shall spare no expense about my dresses, you know."

So saying, Richard looked smilingly around him, as if he had announced tidings which should fill the hearts of all present with joy.

"Where's Isabelle?" he suddenly cried, not beholding her as he looked around.

No one answered Richard's question; but all praised in loud tones the choice he had made of a character.

Singleton put his hands to his ears, looked disgusted, and again asked where Isabelle was.

"Gone to Chichester, to see her aunt," replied the captain.

"Gone! She never told me she was going!"

"It was rather a sudden thought, my dear Singleton," quoth Lund. "Another cup of tea, Catherine, and not quite so sweet. You'll look splendid as the Duke; I wish Brownlow could see you. I suppose you'll get all your things from town."

"Yes! but we can't get on without Isabelle. I shall want her to hear me rehearse, and to help me settle about my dresses, and a hundred other things. We must have her back; I can't do without her."

"I'm afraid Aunt Catherine won't give her up," said Hannah. "Isn't this nice fresh butter, papa? much better than Farmer Smart's."

"Oh! but she *must* come back!" cried Richard peevishly, as he began to frown and to fret.

All the Lunds were willing enough to talk about the "Honeymoon" and the Duke's dresses; but on the subject of Theresa and her sudden departure they were mysterious and reserved; which mystery and reserve greatly irritated Singleton. Lund, seeing how vexed he looked, joyfully rubbed his hands beneath the table.

After breakfast, Richard was wont to sing with Isabelle, to play piano and flute duets with her, and to make love to her; occupations which he now greatly missed.

"How provoking!" he muttered, as he pettishly took up the newspaper and sat behind it, thereby reducing old Lund to whistle through his teeth over the "Navy List."

His friend Mat wore an air of cheerful meekness which greatly added to Richard's irritation.

"Shall we go for a trot over the Downs, this fine breezy morning, Singleton?" asked Lund; "or do you wish to go into Brighton to consult with T. C. Sadler?"

Richard having voted for the Downs, they set off; young Singleton being in a detestable temper, and pceevishly finding fault with the wind, with the sun, with the hills, with the vales, with everything.

"What on earth could possess your sister to go away just now?" he suddenly inquired of Lund.

"Why—I—you see—I don't quite know."

"Why did she keep it so secret?"

"She knew nothing about it herself till late last night."

"How so?"

"My father sent her off."

"Why?"

"Oh! for the good of her health: for change of air and scene."

"She did look rather pale," said Richard.

He had observed that, and that her appetite was gone, which he looked upon as compliments to himself. Theresa had starved herself pale by Mat's advice. Lund tried to turn the conversation, well knowing that Singleton would not allow him to do so. After much skirmishing, Richard at length said—

"There's some mystery about it, I know; you can't hide that from me. Look here, Lund, it is very unfriendly of you not to speak openly to me."

Mat hung down his head, cleared his throat, sighed, and went through many manœuvres, suffering himself at length to be brought to confession.

"Well, then, the fact is, my dear fellow," said Lund, briskly and frankly, "that my other sisters found out that poor Isabelle is in love with you."

"No ! is she though ?"

"Yes ; one can't wonder at it, after all. My dad, with his quarter-deck way, no sooner heard of it from Catherine, than he thought it his duty to send the poor girl to my aunt's, there to stay till you leave us. My father's a fine, honest, upright, old fellow as ever trod a deck ; but he's no feeling for the tender passion : none whatever !"

"Poor Isabelle ! Why I meant this very day to make her an offer of marriage."

Mat looked grave, shaking his head, and saying—

"That would never do ! My father would never give his consent !"

"Why not, pray ?" inquired Singleton, colouring, thinking that his father's suicide might have prejudiced old Lund against him.

"Why, don't you see ? Can't you feel that an old officer like my father would never allow his guest to throw himself away on a girl without a penny. What would the world think ?—what would people say ?"

"I don't care what they would think or say—a pack of fools ! I love your sister, Lund ; and she shall be my wife !"

"Don't dream of it ! You had much better let things remain as they are. Isabelle's a dear, good little girl, very tender, very modest, very sweet-tempered, and all that ; but far, far beneath you, my dear fellow."

Lund, finding that the tighter he held Master Richard Singleton's plaything, and the farther he raised it from his

reach, the more Master Richard Singleton roared and stamped for it, held it firmly above his head until they reached home; when young Singleton rushed into the Captain's presence, angrily announcing that it was his intention to marry Isabelle. Old Lund affected at first to think he was joking; but on seeing how Singleton trembled through rage and agitation, he became serious; making pathetic and moral observations in an apoplectic voice—all tending to cut off hope from Richard. After a long combat Singleton at length said fiercely—

“The manner of my father's death is at the bottom of it; I know, I feel it is.”

At these words, old Lund, folding Richard in a fat embrace, cried with much feeling—

“My dear, dear boy, how *can* you wrong me so? Your poor father's faults do not affect you; far from it. No, no; rough old tar as I am, unvarnished by the world, I know enough of land-lubbers' ways to feel that my poor little Isabelle is far beneath such a man as you are. Give her up, my dear boy, and let her find her level with some curate, poor but virtuous!”

Master Richard Singleton here stamped and roared so violently for his plaything, that after a decent show of resistance, the Captain saw fit to promise that Isabelle should be his.

Young Singleton once more condescended to smile. He felt very happy and triumphant; very much in love with Isabelle; quite contented with himself; firmly persuaded that the Lunds were the best people on earth, and the most deeply attached to “*me*.”

He did not see old Lund wink cunningly, as he bade his son “good night!” neither did he hear him say, in his fattest, most guttural voice, “Mat, my boy, you're a trump!”

On the following day, young Singleton, accompanied by Matthew Lund and Hannah, set out in the phaeton for Chichester, in order to bring home the fair Isabelle. The day was fine, and Richard in the highest spirits. Life now seemed to him smiling and full of promise : so happy can a vain and selfish man feel, when everything and everybody give way to him ; when he is flattered, pampered, and unopposed.

Theresa was not much surprised when the phaeton stopped at her aunt's door. She was much pleased at Singleton's arrival ; he being enchanted on seeing delight beaming from her eyes.

It must not be supposed that Miss Theresa Lund really loved Singleton. No ! the man she would have chosen if she had been left to her own free will was " the Sussex hawbuck : " still, she considered " little Dickie," as she called Richard, too good a match to be despised : she was willing to give up the love of her heart for riches ; with the carriages, horses, plate, jewels, dresses, dainty fare, entertainments, consideration, and position they would give her ; and, for the sake of all these, to marry " little Dickie." As for his genius, talent, and intellect, they were to her as nothing : she understood them not ; greatly preferring her " hawbuck's " liveliness, and somewhat noisy fun.

On the journey home, Isabelle and Richard sat together in the front seat. The moon rose as they left Chichester ; and by her subdued light young Singleton made a tender declaration of love to Isabelle—a poetic declaration, quite worthy of being turned into verse, and which to Theresa appeared to be very like " actors' nonsense."

Theresa, however, through Singleton's eloquent and delicate declaration, saw the coaches and horses, the dress and jewels, which tempted her woman's soul.

She said "Yes," and her lover was in a fever of triumph and excitement.

"Almeria," he thought, "cannot *now* talk about my wearing the willow for her sake; ungrateful, perfidious creature!"

The idea of Almeria, although it raised his ire, made him feel that he still loved her. He swallowed his feelings, however, and persuaded himself that Isabelle was the real, true idol of his heart.

Having thus satisfactorily brought this matter to so successful an issue, Singleton now turned his attention to the serious study of the part of the Duke of Aranza. Isabelle, by the advice of Mat, always called him Aranza; a little familiarity which greatly enchanted him.

Richard, quick and clever, fully entered into the character he had chosen; soon learnt his part; and repeated it so often, that the Lunds knew it nearly as well as he did.

He made daily pilgrimage to the "Theatre Royal," where T. C. Sadler drilled him at "stage business." The rest of the company treated him with a respectful jocularly, pleasing to his feelings; being mixed as it was with a little frank flattery, which brought many a treat from the rich gentleman to his poor brother actors. T. C. Sadler undertook "comic business;" his large mouth and general ugliness giving great point to his parts. He was naturally a melancholy wight, with a taste for poetry, and sentimental young lovers' parts; whilst his form and face condemned him to those of "funny" servants to the aforesaid lovers; to country bumpkins in red wigs and leathers; to cowards; to boobies; in short to characters who by their dress and follies brought such roars of laughter from pit and gallery as made morbid T. C. Sadler's heart ache.

He was to act Jacques, servant to the Duke: which servant has to "come on" as the sham Duke, and to cause



an explosion of laughter by observing that his sword will hang between his legs like a monkey's tail ; an observation which T. C. Sadler made at rehearsal, after the manner of Hamlet moralizing over the skull.

Mrs. T. C. Sadler, a pretty Irish woman, with the slightest dash of brogue, was to undertake Juliana, the Duke's bride. With her, Singleton went through private rehearsals, under the management of T. C. Sadler, who would fain have acted the Duke's part himself.

Singleton made several journeys to town about his costume. Great was his delight and excitement, when a large box containing them arrived, one wet evening, at the Lunds'

"All hands," as the Captain said, were "piped" to help in the unpacking ; Richard smiling, as article after article was taken out, his friends enchanting him with their uproarious praise.

Young Singleton retired to his room with Mr. Goldup, who dressed him in the splendid costume in which he was to appear in the first act. This dress was of white satin, with a full complement of silver spangles—spangles being at that time indispensable in stage dresses ; the greater the man the more spangles he wore. The roses on the shoes had a diamond set in each ; the star on the mantle and the cross for the neck were of emeralds and diamonds ; diamonds decked the sword-hilt, and a diamond shone on the red velvet hat, from which sprang three tall, upright "prince's feathers."

"You look the *krackter* perfect, sir, indeed you do ; and the ruff suits you to a T. You'll excuse me, sir, but my humble opinion is, if you corked in a *impee-ral* as well as *moostachios*, it would be a decided improvement."

Thus spake Mr. Goldup, as Richard stood before him, feeling extremely ducal and haughty.

The "imperial" having been added to the moustache, and Mr. Goldup having been sent to light up the drawing-room, Richard entered in a stage strut, amidst the loud applause of the Lunds.

"I say, Singleton," cried Lund, after the dress had been duly admired, "suppose I get the book and you go through your scene; I can read the other part."

"That's just what I was going to propose, my dear fellow. Now, ladies and gentlemen—gentleman I mean—you can put your chairs in a semicircle and do audience. Look sharp, Lund. All right! let's begin."

The Lund family were regaled with the treat of seeing their prey go through his part, as far as his present costume allowed; the servants being admitted as gallery. His vain heart danced at the loud applause showered on him; and he withdrew quite intoxicated with delight, to be re-dressed in "the garb of a rustic." This was a plain, brown cloth costume, with russet boots and large felt hat, in which Mr. Richard Singleton looked somewhat small and insignificant.

Theresa was now to take the book and read the part of Juliana; when, to Richard's delight, she announced that she knew it by heart. Well she might, considering how many times she had read it over with him.

Singleton's last appearance was made in a grand suit of violet velvet, slashed with yellow, and well overlaid with spangles. He wore his diamonds and emeralds, and a long pair of jingling spurs to his white boots.

In this dress he passed the remainder of the evening; entertaining the company with a plan he had for building a private theatre at Singleton Hall, in which they were all to act: he, of course, taking the chief characters. The T. C. Sadlers were to be invited "to keep us all together;" whilst the band of the Light Horse Volunteers were to act as orchestra.

At length, after much study, great drill, and vast application, young Singleton was pronounced by T. C. Sadler to be fit to appear before the public.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE AMATEUR ACTOR.

THE joyful day dawned on which that great event was to take place ; there having been a successful dress-rehearsal at the theatre a few nights before.

Singleton, arm in arm with Mat, walked over Brighton to read all the play-bills ; from those posted up at the theatre, down to that which was pinned up at the red-herring and periwinkle shop in a back street. In all of these he saw *his* name, and Lund was obliged, thirsty and ennuied as he felt, to gaze on it with the same expression with which he might have gazed on a, to him, beneficent codicil.

“ The first appearance of a gentleman of distinction.”

“ Duke of Aranza

Mr. Singleton.

“ (His first appearance on any stage.) ”

These were the words which Richard hunted after, from street to street, from shop to shop.

Singleton had ordered a grand supper at the Castle Inn, of which he, the two Lunds, and the chief actors, male and female, were to partake ; whilst the “ subs ” were to be well regaled at his expense, in a neighbouring public-house.

Richard having been advised by his Mentor, T. C. Sadler, to keep his head cool, and not indulge until after the performance, ate but a light dinner, taking one single glass of sherry.

He set off after dinner with Mr. Goldup for the theatre,

entertaining himself as he went by imagining what people *would* think when they saw *him* appear in all the splendour of gems and spangles !

The manager received him at the theatre door, and conducted him to his dressing-room ; informing him that the house would be crammed "as tight as a sausage;" that there was not standing room for "so much as an umbrella!"

"We're to have royalty, too!" added T. C. Sadler, in sepulchral tones. "His Royal Highness sent just now to say he required the Prince's box."

Singleton did not know whether to be pleased or vexed on hearing this. It was certainly a fine thing that the King's son should be present at his *début*; but he had heard so much of the Prince's taste and connoisseurship, that a nervous thrill ran through him when he reflected that he must act in his critical presence.

The dressing-room in which Mr. Singleton and Mr. Goldup were shut up was dispiriting, damp, and dingy. The fire smoked and the sea wind was hooting dismally through crannies; whilst Richard's spare dinner, and the idea of the Prince, made him cold and nervous.

"Stir up that devil of a fire; and see if you can't make it blaze, Goldup!" he cried peevishly: "it's very cold, and the wind does make such a dismal row."

"Better let the fire alone, I think, sir: it will draw up presently."

"You're sure you've brought everything?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Then I may as well dress and go down to the green-room fire. It's so frightful to look blue with cold!" said Singleton, with a shiver, and a nervous chatter of the teeth.

By the time the amateur was dressed, he began to feel very much as a child proceeding towards the dentist's is wont

to feel. In spite of vanity, in spite of the certainty that he acted his part admirably, Singleton's heart beat loudly, his hands trembled, his mouth was parched, and his voice husky. "I shall be all right," he thought, "as soon as I begin. There is something so deuced depressing in this dark den of a room. I wish I had brought Lund. He ought to have thought of it himself, and have come with me."

Every one in the green-room was quite at home; chatting, laughing, and taking everything as a matter of course; whilst the hero of the night, nervous and subdued, felt as though he were about to be led out beneath the gallows-tree.

To add to his misery, he tore a large rent in his glove, just as the call-boy shouted for him and "the Count." No time to mend it; and the Prince would detect it an once, he was quite sure.

"Confound the glove!" quavered Singleton, stamping.

"Oh, never mind! it's the left hand one; keep it under your mantle; no one will notice it. Come on, sir, we'd better toddle: it won't do to keep the stage waiting."

As they reached the stage, the orchestra was frantically working up the end of the overture; drumming and trumpeting, and crashing in a manner that made Singleton's heart beat more violently than ever.

Before him hung the green curtain; on the other side of it were the Prince, and a legion of pitiless beings, in whose power he was about to place himself, for approval and applause, or for disapprobation and hisses.

Young Singleton, in undertaking to appear on the stage, had only viewed the triumph which he had decreed to himself. He had only dreamt of excitement, applause, and success; the thought of criticism on the part of his audience had never struck him. He had not considered whether he had nerve to face pit, boxes, and gallery—all filled with

strangers come there for their own amusement, and not to administer to the vanity and delight of Mr. Richard Singleton; not prepared to admire him unless he deserved it.

The last chord of the overture sounded; the little bell tinkled; the audience were hushed. The green curtain was drawn up, discovering the Duke of Aranza (Mr Singleton—his first appearance on any stage), and Count Montalban (Mr. Howard Conway).

Singleton felt very cold, weak, and powerless. His audience smote him with dismay. The house seemed to him one huge face covered with hundreds of eyes. He could see nothing distinctly; yet he caught a confused glimpse, in the "Prince's box," of a large, upright man, with a star, and two fingers tucked into the breast of his waistcoat.

It rested with the Duke to speak first: the Duke opened his mouth, but no sound issued therefrom; whilst the feathers in his cap quivered visibly. Mr. Howard Conway, a tall man with great knee-bones and large toe-joints, whispered to Singleton, "Better begin. They won't like to be kept waiting." Again Singleton opened his trembling lips; but his voice refused to depart from them.

" 'This letter you will give to my steward,' " quoth Mr. Howard Conway, *sotto voce*, prompting Richard.

The gentleman-actor, making a desperate effort, repeated the words somewhat indistinctly, and hurried on to the end of his first speech. The sound of his kusky, quavering voice, added to his panic and nervous tremour.

Count Montalban then burst forth in sonorous tones, with the assurance of an old hand, and the regulation stage twang:—

" *Count.* If I could set *mée* features to *mée* tongue,  
I'd give your 'ighness *jee-oy*," &c. &c.

Mr. Howard Conway was in the habit of dropping the letter H; but he spoke out boldly. Singleton fixed his

eyes on him ; nervously fearing lest he should forget his part in his agitation. He mumbled through it, however ; all the various intonations and effects, by him so studiously attended to in his rehearsals, being now lost, utterly lost, amidst nervousness and terror. When the Duke arrived at the words—

“ Yet though she be prouder  
Than the vex'd ocean at its topmost swell,  
And every breeze will chafe her to a storm,  
I love her still the better.”

A voice in the gallery loudly roared “ *Speak up!* ” Singleton started, and looked towards the spot from whence it came. The hundreds of eyes all turned towards *him*, caused him to gasp with agitation, and totally to forget where he had left off.

“ Go on ! ” “ Speak out ! ” from the gallery.

“ ‘ Some prefer smoothly,’ ” whispered Mr. Howard Conway, “ for ‘ heaven’s sake go on, or it will be all up with you ! ”

“ Go on ! ” and a loud whistle from a theatrical butcher-boy.

“ Some prefer smoothly,” continued the Duke, with an imploring look towards the prompter : and T. C. Sadler, who stood beside that functionary.

The first scene was at length over.

“ *Duke.* Farewell, Count !

*Count* (gathering his right hand fingers into a bunch ; applying them to his lips ; and then, stretching forth his arm, spreading the fingers abroad). Success attend *yourrrr schee-gemes!*

*Duke.* Fortune favour yours ! (Exit Duke.)”

“ Well ! how did it go off ? ” inquired Richard, nervously and huskily, as the manager conducted him to the green-room.

“ Rather flat. You’re a cup too low, Mr. Singleton.

Polly ! give us that arm-chair ? Here, Mr. Singleton, sit down ; you shiver as though you'd the ague. Warm yourself ; and I'll soon set you to rights."

"I don't think I can go on again !" quoth Richard despondingly.

"Don't say so, Mr. Singleton," cried Mrs. T. C. Sadler gaily ; proceeding to encourage Richard, as a nurse might do to a child. "Don't care about the public : they're sure to like you if you put a bold face on the matter ; but if they see you're afraid of them they'll bite you. You were so capital at our dress rehearsal ; wasn't he, T. C., dear ? You *must* go on again, Mr. Singleton : I shall be with you next time, and T. C. will stand in the wing where you can see him ; and he'll nod at you now and then, and that will keep your spirits up."

"Drink this, Mr. Singleton !" said the manager, giving Richard the large tumbler of hot brandy and water he had been busily engaged in brewing for him.

Singleton took the goblet, slowly draining the contents, whilst Mrs. T. C. Sadler mended his glove for him.

Richard Singleton, Esq., had never felt so low spirited in his life. There he sat before the green-room fire in a state of collapse ; sipping hot brandy and water, in his expensive ducal array. His vanity was hurt by his failure, and by the orders to "speak out," and to "go on," which had issued from the upper regions. If his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had softly murmured "Pray, speak a little louder, my dear sir," *that* would have been wounding : but to be roared at by the gallery gave him a feeling of vexation and degradation ; which, added to the very small figure he felt he had made, brought tears into his eyes. He had imagined over and over again his triumphal entry into the green-room after his first scene ; the congratulations of the players ; the applause of the company, and his own proud condescen-



sion on the occasion. There he sat swallowing his tears, and trembling! O vanity, vanity!

"Better now, Mr. Singleton?" inquired T. C. Sadler, as he took the empty tumbler from Richard's clammy hand.

"I shall be presently; don't talk to me: let me alone!"

Singleton felt the hot drink circulating in his veins; and, as he warmed, a slight degree of courage sprang up within him.

When Richard appeared in the second act with Juliana, a large cloak over his grand dress to denote that he had been travelling, he was, thanks to the brandy and water, somewhat less nervous than he had been. His arms seemed freer from pinioning; his legs unclogged, and his tongue less parched. He ventured to glance towards the Prince; he saw the Lunds; and he could distinguish Mr. Goldup's ape's countenance in the pit. Still, he was not enough at ease to remember all the points he had so studied. His acting was a mere repeating of his part. He knew that he could, and that he ought to have made a "hit;" he felt that to do so was to him impossible.

"What do you think of it, this time?" inquired Singleton of the manager, on leaving the stage.

"Not much fault to be found!" returned T. C. Sadler gravely. The manner in which the words were uttered sunk Singleton's spirits lower than ever. He retired despondingly to his dressing-room.

Singleton found Mr. Goldup at his post; ready to help him in his change of costume.

"Well, Goldup!" he said, with some hesitation.

"Well, sir! you *did* look killing. I heard several respectable females say they never see *anythink* so handsome! A *leetle* timid at starting, sir; but it was to be expected; and the di'monds was the object of admiration all round me, sir; I give you my word they was. You came out much

bolder in your second scene, sir : more like yourself a good deal. I see the Prince looking you over very attentive indeed, sir ; his *Ryal* Highness is a tip-top judge of dress and *jewls*. Quite an honour to have *him* present ! ”

Singleton felt that his valet was damning him with faint praise ; felt that his appearance had created no sensation ; felt that it was a failure.

“ I can’t bear this costume, it makes one feel so undressed ! it won’t carry me on a bit,” he said, in trembling tones. “ I don’t think I *can* go on, and face those brutes in the gallery again.”

Singleton sat down half dressed, whilst Mr. Goldup tried to encourage him, and to induce the smoking fire to burn.

The crest-fallen amateur folded his arms gloomily, letting his head sink on his breast. Bitter were his reflections ; his courage diminished every moment.

“ Beg *parding*, sir, but if you don’t dress you’ll keep the stage and his *Ryal* Highness waiting,” cried Mr. Goldup, cheerfully.

“ I won’t go on again ! It’s impossible to please all those savages ! ”

“ Try, sir ; I’m sure you look sweetly interesting in the garb of a rustic. You’ll have all the ladies on your side.”

“ There’s a knock at the door ; see who it is ! ”

It was the manager who knocked.

Singleton was keeping the stage waiting. The pit and gallery were growing impatient.

Sadler, half imploringly, half angrily, hurried Richard’s toilette ; and dragged rather than led him towards the stage.

“ I won’t go on again ! ” cried Singleton.

“ You *must* ! ”

With these words, the manager pushed the amateur forward. Singleton found himself face to face with the

roaring public. He had kept the stage waiting so long that impatience had become anger.

It was some time before silence was restored.

The nerving effect of the brandy and water had worn off, and when Singleton, cold and dispirited, essayed to speak, he was hardly audible. Then recommenced the cries he so dreaded.

“Speak up!” “Louder!” “Go on!” smote his ears.

The Prince applauded, good-naturedly, with a view to encourage the trembling amateur.

The uncourteous “masses” followed not his kind example. Singleton, unable to make himself heard, became the object of their scorn and derision.

A hiss was heard from time to time. These hisses began to coalesce, until one universal hiss prevailed. Then cries of “Off, off!” resounded through the house.

Singleton’s sight became misty. All things swam before his eyes. A sound as of rolling billows filled his ears. He rushed from the stage, and fell fainting into the arms of T. C. Sadler, who called him a fool, as the curtain came down, and hisses, laughter, and uproar filled the theatre.

Thus ended Mr. Singleton’s first appearance on any stage!

Whilst Goldup attended on his fainting master, Mr. T. C. Sadler came before the curtain to announce that the performance would be continued immediately.

Singleton little knew that, in a remote dressing-room, a being, furnished with a newspaper and a pot of ale, had been sitting ready dressed as the Duke, to take his place in case of a failure on his part. This tall, thin, slim being, Mr. Shadwell McGregor by name, having emerged from his hiding place, now appeared on the boards; whilst Mr. Goldup, having given it as his opinion that his fallen master had better not be undressed till he got home, set off with

him in a post-chaise for the Lunds' cottage in the Downs. Arrived there, Mr. Singleton was carefully committed to bed by his faithful valet; whilst the two male Lunds and the players were doing justice to the supper ordered by Singleton at the Castle; and at which he had intended to have been so theatrically and triumphantly festive.

The following morning there was a consultation among the Lunds as to whether they should condole with Richard, or treat his failure waggishly. Mat judiciously observing that they had better all of them wait and take their cue from Singleton himself, it was unanimously resolved that such should be their line of conduct.

The discomfited actor remained in his room the whole day, ashamed, mortified, and full of wrath. He sent Mr. Goldup into Brighton to pay his bills and to "transact business" with T. C. Sadler. It had been Singleton's intention to pass the winter at Brighton; to have frequently appeared on the Brighton boards, preparatory to bursting forth as a star in London; and to have given a grand ball at the Castle, under the auspices of a broken-down dowager Countess, a great ally of the Lunds.

These fair visions were all gone! He felt that he could never again show his face in Brighton; the very idea of such a thing sent a whole flock of arrogant geese running over his grave.

On Mr. Goldup's return, he brought with him some copies of the Brighton paper which Singleton had desired might be left for him at the theatre that morning. He meant to have sent them to Brownlow, Dr. Savory, and other friends, in order that they might therein read an account of *his début*, of *his* success, and of *his* talents.

"Burn all those confounded papers!" cried Singleton, without daring to look over the account of his failure the night before. "Have you ordered the horses?"

"Yes, sir! they'll be here at six o'clock *precisely*. Shall you breakfast before you start, sir?"

"No! bring me some sandwiches and a bottle of ale in an hour's time, and mind you say nothing about my departure. Give my compliments to Captain Lund, and say I do not feel well enough to go down to dinner; do you hear?"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Goldup hopped downstairs with the Brighton papers, to read the theatrical news to the servants. Their expectations were disappointed. The paper only stated that an amateur had made his appearance the evening before, and that owing to his "sudden indisposition," Mr. Shadwell McGregor had, "at a moment's notice," undertaken the part of the Duke of Aranza, in order that the performances might not be stopped.

Richard Singleton retreated from the Lunds' without their knowledge, on the following morning. He left a letter of thanks to the Captain, and one of love for Isabelle, together with the diamond that had fastened the three snow-white ostrich feathers to his cap. He moreover left her his diamond cross; and informing her that sudden business called him from her side, told her that he should set the lawyers to work on the marriage settlements, &c., and that the moment his mourning should be over, he should make her his. He concluded by a long rhapsody which Theresa could not quite understand; but from which she gleaned that she and Richard were to write to each other; that he adored her; and that he hoped ere long to see her again.

"You'd better keep that letter, *Tee*, my girl; and indeed all others that you may receive from your little Dickie." Such was Mat's advice to his sister Theresa.

It must be confessed that the Lunds found the departure

of their friend, patron, and dupe, to be a very great relief. After two months' never failing and assiduous minding of p's and q's, and bearing of young Singleton's egotism, to be without him was like the putting on an easy pair of slippers after a march in tight boots over a hot and dusty road.

The very sound of his voice had become painful to them; they dispised and disliked him; and yet, truckling worldlings! they fawned on him and glorified him for the filthy lucre of gain.

Singleton, on leaving his parasites, retired to Singleton Hall, dispirited, cross, and gloomy. He gave his theatrical wardrobe to Mr. Goldup, who got rid of it to advantage; then shutting himself up in his study, he tried to forget his late mischance, which gave him a cold chill whenever he thought of it, by burying himself in the romance, which was to add to his literary fame, and bring him new honour and glory.

This work was a tissue of horrors in four volumes; containing all the *dramatis personæ* necessary for a terrifying romance: a string of villains, all intent on injuring Isabelle, the heroine, and Mortemart, the slim insipid hero. There was the wicked Baron, a drunken tyrant; the impious monk, Father Dominick, who stalked about frowning, and who sat in the confessional grasping the hilt of a "stiletto;" the funny monk, Brother Pedro, whose life was passed in draining a bowl, and ogling milk-maids; the jocose servant of Mortemart, who was always swooning with fright, yet ever ready to die for his master, especially at the Inquisition.

Then there was the gloomy Corsair, Richard Singleton himself; the man who, sensitive and talented, was crushed, misunderstood, and slighted by the world; who, in consequence of the world's conduct, was driven to prey on his

fellow-creatures ; to scowl, to curse, to speak hoarsely, to delight in sin, in danger, in blood, and death.

Manfred, the Corsair, entertained a fell passion for "the young Isabelle," as indeed did Father Dominick, an Inquisitor, the wicked Baron, and a Spanish grandee. Manfred's unrequited passion cast him into despairing cruelty. In the drawing of this character young Singleton poured out on paper his overflowing against the world. Manfred created an immense sensation, when he appeared before the romance-devouring public. He was declared to be wicked, "but so interesting;" his morbid vanity was "interesting;" his rabid passion was "interesting;" his gloomy misanthropy was "interesting;" his wounded feelings were "interesting;" the manner in which he committed suicide—by blowing himself up, with his ship and crew—was "sublimely interesting."

Father Dominick was carried off in a thunder-storm by Beelzebub: the Inquisitor was poisoned at a banquet by the jealous Spanish grandee. The baron became an austere hermit; Isabelle and Mortemart were married; and Brother Pedro, having been elected "Lord Abbot," gave a series of rattling orgies to all the neighbouring monasteries.

On these materials the genius of Singleton built up horrors that made the blood run cold. Manfred was the gem of the work, being the first corsair of the kind invented: a creature endowed with generosity and cruelty, bravery, and every great and mean quality: a mental monster: a Sphinx, a Centaur, or a Minotaur, being just as possible as such a man. Intent on his work, Singleton shut himself up, seeing no one. Janet was aware of his presence in the neighbourhood, but he came not near her home. She heard rumours of his intended marriage, but as they wanted confirmation she heeded them not; hoping against hope that each day would bring Singleton to her side. As she

worked, to all appearance calmly by her mother's side, Janet's colour would deepen, and her heart beat at the sound of the door-bell. She scarcely dared to look up, as the neat maid ushered in the visitor. Her soul saddened, and she sighed softly, as Mr. Small, or the Vicar, or Mr. Blenkins would appear. Singleton alone, of all their friends, came not.

Janet tried to console herself with the idea that Richard had not recovered from the shock of his father's death ; and that in time he would be to her all that he had been of yore. She grieved over his supposed grief ; and ardently longed to console his vexed spirit.

"He is so sensitive," she thought, "so refined, that his father's death must weigh him to the earth !"

Then she sighed, opened his poems, read therein, and fondly dreamt that the next day would bring him to the cottage. Still, Singleton came not ; yet still Janet hoped on.

At Christmas, young Singleton, laden with turkey, chine, and many other gifts, proceeded to the Lunds' to bask in the sunshine of Isabelle's smiles. He did not set foot in Brighton ; and the most remote approach to the subject of plays was not once made in his presence by his discreet satellites. They had to endure "Manfred the Corsair," however, that romance was so well written, and so skilfully concocted, that the ladies were ringing their bells, and rushing into each other's rooms throughout the night ; afraid of being alone after the terrific and ghastly events which Richard had read to them. This conduct on their part was a triumph to the vain author ; the fear of silly women over impossible adventures being agreeable food to the vanity of his mind.

On leaving the Lunds', Singleton carried Mat to town with him ; to "watch 'Manfred' through the press," as they had done the poems. Sixty times a day Mr. Matthew



Lund sent "Manfred the Corsair" to that convenient being for whom he was so well fitted; so weary was he of Father Dominick, Isabelle, the Spanish grandee, and all the offspring of Richard's brain. However, when on receiving a cheque for a hundred pounds from his publisher's, Singleton threw it carelessly to Lund, that arch toady felt fully rewarded for his pains and weariness.

"There, Lund, take that for your trouble!" cried the author.

To this Mat replied by clasping his thin, red hands; putting his head on one side; and exclaiming fervently, "My *dear* Singleton!"

Richard had amused himself by re-furnishing his house. The furniture of his father's time brought unpleasant recollections to his mind; besides not being in his opinion suited to the abode of a lady. This caused much gossiping in the neighbourhood, which reached the ears of Janet.

"Do *you* think it is true that Richard is going to be married, mamma?" she inquired of Mrs. Adams, with blushing cheeks, as they sat together in the dusk of evening.

"I think it very likely indeed, my dear!" was the calm reply which sent the warm blood back to her heart, leaving her cheek pale, whilst tears for an instant dimmed her eyes.

The time of Singleton's mourning was drawing to a close: all things were prepared for his happiness. The Lunds had found some difficulty when Theresa's name became necessary for law papers; not knowing exactly how to inform her lover that her real name was not Isabelle. Mat, the puss in boots of the worthy family, soon set his kin at ease.

"Oh! tell him," said Lund, "that it was a mistake of the godmother, whose name was Theresa. Say that on hearing 'Name this child!' she said 'Theresa;' and that you, sir, and my mother were so taken aback you could not

interfere ; but that we always call her Isabelle, because that was to have been the dear infant's name. That'll do, I think !”

“Mat, you're a trump !” growled Puss's papa, approvingly.

About a fortnight before the nuptials of Singleton and Isabelle, that happy and excited damsel felt somewhat unwell ; very uncomfortable ; more unwell still ; very ill indeed.

Miss Theresa Lund sought her bed. Miss Theresa Lund was covered with an eruption. Miss Theresa Lund had—the measles !

“The devil !” cried Mat, “what a deuced bore ! Delays are dangerous. How could Tee be such a fool as to catch them just now ! I must write to little Dickie, or we shall have him here next Monday. It will never do, though, to let him know what's the matter with Tee. Manfred the Corsair could never stand a bride with the measles. We must say it's a nervous fever, from the excess and excitement of happiness : there will be something sentimental and flattering in that, you know. We must keep him away too, or it will all ooze out through that long-armed ape Goldup. I *never* knew such a confounded bore in all my life, as this is !”

Isabelle's illness was a great blow to Singleton. The misfortune which befell him with regard to his marriage with Almeria, made him doubly nervous on hearing of his bride's “fever.” He loved Isabelle, moreover ; and he grieved over himself, in true selfish style, for the sickness which had fallen on her.

He asked himself if his marriage would ever take place ? Would Isabelle die or recover ? This question distracted him : he felt angry, grieved, irritable, and misanthropical. To whom should he complain ? Who would listen to his misery ? who would condole with, soothe, and comfort him ?

He went over the names of his acquaintances ; but in them he saw no comfort : they were cold-hearted and did not care for "*me*"—did not understand "*me*." At length he bethought him of Mrs. Adams and Janet, telling himself that they would enter into his feelings, that they would listen to him, that they would comfort him.

Richard therefore ordered his horses, and cantered over to the cottage.

Janet, sad and musing, was returning from the garden, when Singleton rode up to the gate.

Joy sparkled in her dark eyes on seeing him. His vain heart bounded when he beheld her look of love, and the blush that covered her cheeks as he drew near.

Singleton came to the Adams' to be consoled under his grief for Isabelle's sickness ; but not one word concerning her did he speak.

His fickle heart veered round towards Janet.

He had not seen her for many months ; he found her faded down : the bright colour on her cheek, which he used to call "*vulgar*," softened to a fainter hue ; her eyes finer than ever.

For two hours did Singleton remain beneath Mrs. Adams' roof : two hours which appeared to Janet but as so many minutes ; but which amply repaid her for the torment of months.

The next day, the next day, and the next, saw Richard at the cottage in a state of comparative happiness. He brought his romance, which he read to the two ladies—a romance which, in the sobriety of her soul, Mrs. Adams deemed to be both wicked and foolish. To Janet it appeared a wonder of talent, and full of interest. Of Manfred, however, she could not approve. Her ideas concerning him brought about discussions between herself and Singleton, gratifying to the author, inasmuch as they lengthened the reading, and

proved the very great interest which Janet took in him and his authorcraft.

“Poor Manfred!” sighed Janet, the reading being brought to an end: “he was without religion; and that was the source of all his misery!”

Singleton smiled contemptuously at this remark; but his smile was not perceived by his friends.

Janet had returned to the happy employment she had long abstained from: the reading of Richard’s poetry; the forming visions concerning their joint happiness. She loved him with an admiring tenderness for his supposed obedience to his father’s will in the matter of his alliance with Almeria; she fondly pitied him for all she imagined that he had undergone through his father’s death.

Singleton was now his own master. Simple-minded, loving Janet believed in his love for her; believed herself to be unworthy of it; cherished it, and looked forward to a life to be made happy by being devoted to Richard. How did it come to pass that Mrs. Adams did not perceive her daughter’s affection for Richard, or his manœuvres towards Janet?

She looked upon him merely as Janet’s old playfellow; whilst he, in his cunning, so ordered his conduct, that Janet only could see and understand his show of love.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### AN EVIL MOMENT.

JANET, willing to provide an agreeable surprise for Singleton, had begged Mrs. Adams not to let him know of an expected arrival; that of his friend Brownlow. She pictured to herself the astonishment and joy of Richard on unexpectedly

meeting him and Rose. She had not noted how Singleton darkened, whenever, in the affection of their overflowing hearts, she and Mrs. Adams had sang Brownlow's praises. She knew not what black passions their words called forth in him, when they spoke of Brownlow's kindness to and love for Rose, and of their unclouded happiness.

One morning, on arriving at the cottage, Singleton found Rose seated in her old place in the drawing-room.

Singleton started, and his dark cheek flushed. Janet was not present to be startled by his blush, or by his flashing eyes.

On beholding Rose, all his old feelings awoke within him. She was far prettier than she had ever been before ; an air of perfect happiness being spread over her, adding to her beauty, and to the gentle expression of her smiling face. Singleton's passion for her began again to burn. He sat glowering at Rose as she worked at a very small cap ; he watched her little, white, soft hands, as she directed her needle in and out of the baby's head-dress. He was absent and moody ; inwardly comparing Rose, so calm and gentle, with sly, hoidenish Miss Theresa Lund ; preferring Rose's soft beauty to Isabelle's bright loveliness.

" Why should that fellow have had her : why is she not mine ? "

Singleton, having put this question to himself, began to fume and to fret ; to answer Mrs. Adams, and even Rose, pettishly ; and to devote Brownlow to the infernal gods. Richard forgot Isabelle, and thought not on Janet, in his anger and grief at knowing that he had lost Rose—that Brownlow had won her. He saw, too, that she was beginning to feel uneasy in his presence ; that she avoided his snake-like gaze ; and that on his account she was about to leave the room, when Brownlow, gay as a cricket, came into it. He saw the fond look cast by Rose on her husband ; he

observed how she sat down beside him, casting a glance at Singleton, which seemed to say, "I am safe now, and you dare not hurt me ! "

"I've just been over to the Hall, the field way, and that's how I missed you, I suppose, Singleton. How do you think Rose is looking? Come, Rose, hold up your head, and show yourself off to your old friend : he's not seen you since you threw yourself away upon me."

Singleton could have annihilated Brownlow, as he saw the looks of love that passed between him and Rose, during this little speech of Brownlow's.

"Oh! by-the-by," continued Brownlow to Richard, "have you seen the beautiful wonder of the world, all alive and kicking, that we've got upstairs ? "

"No : I don't know what you mean," replied Singleton moodily ; well knowing that Brownlow was speaking of the small man for whom Rose was working the cap.

"No ? Stop a minute then, and I'll bring him to you."

So saying, Brownlow left the room ; returning anon bearing in his brawny arms a small creature with bright hazel eyes and ruddy skin : a creature who sat up, staring about him good-humouredly ; and who wore a cap like a bishop's wig, and white petticoats long and flowing as a riding habit.

"There's a jolly little country squire for you, old fellow!" cried Brownlow, fondly, as he kissed the small being's forehead daintily with the tip of his lips, in order that his beard should not fray its tender skin. The little being the while rubbed its soft, fat, pink hand over its father's face ; making strange little abortive jumps and springs, uttering odd sounds, and smiling as though at some very good jokes, about which no one knew anything except itself.

"Oh, *that's* it, is it?" said Singleton contemptuously,

looking on Brownlow's little helpless son as he would have done on a squat and speckled toad.

"Yes, there he is, poor little fellow! He's something like the Rev. Silly in figure; and I believe that's why Rose is so fond of him. Eh, Rose?" Brownlow sat down, placing his boy tenderly on his strong thigh, and passing his arm gently round him, looking more stalwart and manly than ever, in contrast with his babe, the joy of his brave heart.

Singleton gazed on poor, little, innocent, unconscious Brownlow in so ogre-like and diabolical a manner, that it was wonderful that the babe did not wither away and die beneath his gleaming eyes.

Brownlow, quite unaware of Singleton's bitter feelings, continued to talk and laugh with him openly and kindly; as was his wont; whilst his little son grasped his brown finger, as its father gently danced it on his knee.

"Well, have you had enough of him?" inquired Brownlow, after a time.

"Oh yes, I hate babies!—little brutes, staring like idiots?"

These last words were spoken by Singleton to himself alone. If Janet could have heard them, how would she, in her love and charity, have excused them?

On that day, as Richard Singleton sat alone over his wine, in the home of his forefathers, he asked himself how it came to pass that all the world was, or seemed to be, so happy, whilst he was ever thwarted, and generally miserable. He had riches beyond most men, great talents, much genius—how was it then that he was so moody and so wretched? How was it that his schemes failed, whilst other people were successful and contented? In answer to these questions, young Singleton began to accuse Providence, his evil fate, his unlucky star—all things save himself. He

was not aware that let a man have riches, health, strength, greatness, the admiration of the world, and all that fallen man most prizes—all that he would sell his soul for—and let him have one single passion out of order, untamed, riotous, tyrannical, and craving, that man will be of all men the most miserable.

Disease, poverty, misfortune, all centring in one being possessing a pious, well-poised, faithful soul, will fail to make that being wretched, as is the owner of worldly prosperity with a fury-hunted spirit, tormented by an ungoverned passion. Singleton was quite ignorant of the diseased state of his mind. He looked without for the cause of his unhappiness: he should have looked within.

Brownlow, Brownlow! there was the man, he told himself, who stood in his way; there was the hated being whose happiness and whose goodness were gall and wormwood to splenetic Singleton.

In a vile temper Richard sought his room, threw himself on his bed, and solaced his jaundiced mind by versifying his horribly distempered and irreligious feelings. Thus he began a semi-atheistical poem—a drama; which at a later period electrified the unholy portion of mankind by its “bold views,” its “mystic grandeur,” and original ideas.

Brownlow sought Richard as friend seeks friend; and Singleton hated Brownlow as enemy hates enemy. Still they met from day to day as friends, and as a matter of course.

One morning Brownlow was at Singleton Hall at an early hour. Fresh and gay was he as the morning itself, and duly armed with gun, powder, and shot, for a day's sport. It was the first of September; and it had been agreed upon that he and Singleton should go together on a shooting expedition to land of Richard's, on the other side of Warton.



They were to take neither party nor gamekeepers ; they were to have what Brownlow called, " a jolly Robinson Crusoe day of it ; " he, Singleton, and the dogs, being the only sporting creatures present.

They drove to their ground, then over stubble-fields and through turnip-fields they roamed, gun in hand. Singleton was a good shot—a better shot than Brownlow ; wherefore he liked to show off his skill to his bitterly-hated companion. Brownlow, who had not the habit of comparing himself with every one he came near, was well content with his own share of success : and quite delighted to see Richard so pleased with himself and his sport.

The morning was fresh and breezy ; sweet smells were borne on the light wind ; health and strength were in the very air. The bells of a distant village church, merrily ringing in honour of a wedding, sounded now high, now low, now afar off, now near at hand, as the breeze blew stronger or fainter around the sportsmen.

As morning merged into noon, large fleecy mountains of cloud were blown up from the horizon by the freshening wind. Across the sun they quickly scudded, casting part of the fields into shade, whilst the remaining part looked all the brighter for the contrasting shadows. As noon wore away, gray clouds took the place of their white forerunners. They came up lightly at first, then in thicker masses, until they spread themselves, in a dull heaviness, over the whole face of heaven.

The bells were silent ; the wind was hushed ; there was a dead stillness over the land. A few light drops of rain began to fall, ceased, fell again, again ceased ; then coming down faster, and by degrees faster, the light drops gave place to heavier ones, and these to heavier still, until the low hanging dark gray clouds poured their deluge steadily over the face of the earth.

"We had better go home," cried Richard, who hated rain. "We've a good ten-mile walk before us, and this infernal weather!"

"Let's be off then: we shan't feel the weather if we button up our coats, and step out sharply; besides it will make a good dinner, and a warm fire afterwards, all the more jolly."

The dogs were called in; coats duly buttoned to the chin; guns discharged and carried beneath the arm; and off set sportsmen and dogs on their ten-mile march. Brownlow loudly and clearly whistled to cheer them on their way. Singleton began to feel tired and cross as they sped over stubble-fields, through rutty lanes, scrambling up banks and through hedges, and going through other rough, cross-country gambols. The way was perfectly well known to Brownlow; Singleton had never been there before. He peevishly swore at all the little adventures on the road; waxing more and more out of temper, in spite of his friend's efforts to soothe his irritability and to cheer him on.

Richard, not much used to foot exercise, began to feel very faint and weary; his feet and knees began to ache, and he could hardly keep pace with stalwart Brownlow—although he would have died sooner than have asked him to slacken his speed. The dogs, with drooping ears and tails, and wet and shining coats, followed their masters with dejected mien. On these, Richard, from time to time, vented the feelings he would willingly have vented on Brownlow; who, taking the poor dogs' part, added to Singleton's ill-temper.

After a plashy tramp for some four miles, they passed over a flat and swampy meadow. The water saturated Singleton's boots, oozing through his toes at every step; he feeling inclined to lie down in despair and go no further.

At the end of this meadow ran the river; which could be forded at a spot well known to Brownlow.

"Hallo!" cried Brownlow, eyeing the river, which was covered by circles appearing and disappearing quick as thought, as the rain-drops smote the water: "Hallo! the ford's deeper by two or three feet than it was a fortnight ago. It will be nearly up to your breast, Singleton. Will you try it, or how? We're as wet as water-rats, so a little more wetting won't kill us; and we shall keep moving, you know!"

"Confound it all! We'd much better have driven home."

"Who'd have dreamt it would have turned so *myst*, as Mr. Goldup would say? You see, old boy, if we go round, our ten-mile walk will be stretched to sixteen or more, and you look dead beat already. What will you do? I'm your man either for the ford or the bridge, so give the word either way!"

Singleton looked ruefully on the rapidly running river, and thought with dismay on the distant bridge.

"How the devil could you bring us such an infernal dance?" he cried angrily.

"Why, my dear fellow, it's the shortest cut. We're now only three miles from Warton. You can get a glass of ale at the Duck, and you'll be home in no time. Come! will you paddle through? Faint heart never won a fair lady!"

Singleton having surlily voted for the ford, Brownlow walked into the river, calling the dogs, and keeping an eye on Richard—of whose strength he felt somewhat doubtful.

Singleton, slight and slim, had no weight to oppose to the rushing water, which soon rose to his breast. Brownlow waded slowly and steadily on, placing himself between Richard and the current. This manœuvre on his part was perceived by young Singleton, who, as in school and college days, hated him for the assistance he so simply and kindly brought.

The dogs swam sturdily over. Singleton's footing was unsteady on the pebbly bottom of the river.

"You'd better take hold of my shot-belt," said Brownlow, meekly ; fearing for his friend's safety, and yet not wishing to show any superiority over him.

Singleton seized the welcome belt, and in silence the two sportsmen reached the opposite bank, which was steep, crumbling, and treacherous to climb. Brownlow helped the dogs as they struggled from the water, scrambling and slipping against the steep bank. He then turned to Richard, asking which of them should get out first and help the other.

"Get out if you mean to do so ! Don't stand talking in the water all day !" was Singleton's gracious reply.

Brownlow, smiling, threw his gun ashore, seized the root of a tree, and dragged himself out of the river. He then, lying on his face, stretched forth his arms, landed Singleton's gun, and firmly holding him by the collar, helped him once more to stand on *terra firma*.

"We look like two river gods ; we only want urns under our arms to be complete !" cried Brownlow laughing. Singleton replying, "Confound river gods, and their river too ! Which way now ?" they resumed their march, Brownlow leading.

The way now led along the river side ; the path gradually rising up the side of a hill, until at about three-quarters of a mile from the ford, it was fifty feet above the water. The rugged bank stood up perpendicularly from the stream ; the path being on the extreme edge of the bank, which again rose five or six feet, and was topped by the straggling hedge of a cottage garden.

The dashing rain had made this path extremely slippery ; roots of trees spread across it here and there ; piercing the bank also, and hanging from its sides. It was a dangerous pass to a careless walker.

Singleton, as he paced angrily along behind Brownlow, let loose all his bitterest feelings of envy and hatred for the man who thought so kindly of him: the only being in the world who really liked him, and who dreamed not of the stormy feelings that raged so fiercely in Richard's breast.

They walked on in silence; but that silence was suddenly broken by a cry from Brownlow. Hitting his toe against a huge root, he tripped, slipped, and rolled off the path. He caught a hanging root with one hand as he fell, and with the other tried to hold on by the slippery ground. The bank shelved inwards beneath the footway; there was no hold for Brownlow's feet, the earth crumbling away beneath them, as he struggled in vain to find a support.

"This is no joke, Singleton!" he cried, looking up gravely at Richard; is there anything between me and the river, on which I could let myself down?"

"No, nothing!"

"I've no purchase on this root, it's too low beneath the path; and if I let it go it would be all over with me, for I've no hold on the path itself. For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, stoop down and lend me a hand! you can do it safely."

Singleton stood perfectly still, glaring on Brownlow as he hung over the precipice, striving in vain to raise himself on to the path. Brownlow's favourite, a beautiful white and tan setter, sniffed at his face, ran uneasily to and fro, whining piteously, as though she would help him if she could. Then she would look up at Singleton, her eyes speaking, and begging him to help her beloved master.

"Poor Nelly!" said Brownlow, as the setter anxiously licked his face. "Singleton help me! think of Rose; think of my boy! I would not ask you if it put you in any danger. Kneel down and lend me your hands!"

Singleton's morbid, unchecked passions gave the devil full power over him. He looked on Brownlow's imploring

eyes. Nature loudly called on him to stretch forth his hand and save his friend. Passion held him back. There at his feet was the man he so hated ; there he was, and at his mercy.

“Singleton, help me ! Help me, for Heaven’s sake ! ”

Singleton, with a fiend’s smile, hesitated. The Evil One triumphed over him, exulting in his triumph. Richard folded his arms. Brownlow’s straining, aching hands let go their hold. He cast one look of reproach and despair at Singleton, as he called on Heaven to protect Rose, and then fell back into the river beneath him ; his head striking against a huge stone in his fall. Nelly, with a sharp bark, plunged off the bank after him.

The remaining dogs rushed barking down the path, and Singleton was left alone. At that instant the wind, which had been lulled, burst forth with sudden violence, bowing tree-tops before it, and blowing the pouring rain along like a cloud. Singleton’s wet garments clung tightly to him, yet the sweat burst out from every pore ; his legs trembled, his heart loudly beat, as he stared fixedly on the space from which Brownlow had disappeared. He seemed still to behold his mild, imploring eyes—to hear his last words ; and yet he could not believe in the reality of his own devilish deed. He had suffered his friend to die without lending him the succour he had begged for.

He had stood but five or six minutes, trembling, panting, and repenting ; those few minutes appeared to him a century. A sound above him aroused him. Through the hedge burst three countrymen, whilst looking over it, Mr. Blenkins, in his long, white coat, and sheltered beneath a huge oilskin umbrella, calmly directed them to make for the bend of the river, saying, “It’s like enough the stream may carry him in there, and you’ll get him out. I’ll send Tom Walsh and his son to help you ! ” The men ran off at full speed down the hill.

Mr. Blenkins' voice sounded in Richard's ear as though it were reading his death-warrant, as the old surgeon called to him coldly and sternly to follow the path to the top of the hill, turn to his right, and come to him in the cottage.

"He has seen it all!" thought Singleton. "I thought I was alone. Is Brownlow dead, or will they save him?"

A hundred confused ideas passed through Singleton's brain, as he toiled up to the cottage. When he stood before Mr. Blenkins he could not speak a word, nor raise his guilty eyes to his face. Trembling and cold, he sank into a chair; indistinct images of Rose and of Rose's grief—of the awfulness of the crime his passions had led him into—flitted before his agitated mind.

"Poor young gentleman!" cried the woman who dwelt in the cottage, "he be struck all of a heap! Never mind, sir; I've no doubt my master and they will get him out alive!"

Singleton heard not her words; he sat as though in a trance, until Mr. Blenkins told him to follow him.

"I shall drive you to the Duck; and there you must go to bed, or you'll get your death of cold. Come! get into the gig! William, you run down towards the ford, and help the people you'll find there: they'll tell you all about it. I'll send back Mr. Perkins in the gig, with whatever's necessary, and orders how to act. Collect Mr. Singleton's dogs, and bring them to the Duck. Look sharp!"

So saying, Mr. Blenkins drove off, leaving his servant to go and help the men who were looking for Brownlow's body. He pulled up at Tom Walsh's cottage, sending him and his son to the scene of action; and then made for Warton, without looking at Singleton or speaking a single word.

On arriving at the Duck, Mr. Blenkins ordered a bed to be got ready directly, a fire to be lighted, and a large

tumbler of brandy and water, hot and strong, to be prepared. When all was ready, he took Singleton to his room.

"Strip, sir!" cried the doctor. Richard silently obeyed; pulling off his wet, heavy, clinging clothes.

"Rub yourself dry!" Again Singleton obeyed.

"Wrap yourself up in that; and get into bed!"

Mr. Blenkins threw Singleton a warm blanket, in which, having wrapped himself, he crept shivering to bed.

"Drink that!" cried the doctor, giving him the hot potion.

"Now lie down and keep quiet till I come again. I shall sent for Goldup. Waiter! here, take away these clothes, and hang 'em up to dry."

During all this time Singleton had never uttered a word. He felt that to speak would be impossible. His soul was wrung with an abject fear. Horror, too, shook him when he thought of Brownlow.

Singleton had never before endured such agony of mind.

"Why did I do it? Why did I do it?" this trembling creature continued to ask himself. His intense hatred for, and envy of Brownlow died away, as it were, now that he had wreaked his vengeance on him. He felt remorse for his crime. It was not Rose he felt for; neither did he feel for Brownlow's untimely separation from his virtuous earthly happiness; no, it was for self that he felt; for self that he shivered and trembled.

In due time Mr. Goldup arrived, with all things necessary for his master's comfort.

"Bless me, sir!" he cried, "what *orrid* circumstances! I've seen Dr. Blinkins; he gave me this mixture, sir. A tablespoonful to be taken immediately; to be repeated every three hours; and Dr. Blinkins will run in the last thing at night. He says you'd better keep in the blanket just as you are till then, sir: I'm going to have a bed made up on



the sofa ; and I've no doubt we shall be as comfort'ble as such unfort'nit circumstances will permit of."

"Hold your tongue ! Don't talk so !"

"Very good, sir ! Allow me to say, you *do* remind me so of my late lamented master, your good father, sir !"

As evening drew on, Singleton's head and limbs began to ache, and cold chills to steal over him.

"Ah ! feverish !" quoth Mr. Blenkins, when he "ran in" the last thing at night. "You'll be worse to-morrow, a deuced deal ! Keep quiet where you are. Mr. Goldup, I shall send a fever draught : mind he takes it."

Mr. Blenkins spoke these words in tones so like he was wont to speak to old Jenny when Richard was a refractory child, that he felt the old sensation created by his "bogie" rise within him.

Singleton passed a miserable night : his body shivering, burning, and aching ; his mind restless through horror, fear, and the upbraiding of conscience.

Every half-hour Mr. Goldup was aroused to tell him the time ; to stir the fire ; to look out at the weather ; to give him drink ; or to smooth his bed.

Towards dawn Singleton dropped off to sleep ; allowing his valet to do the same. The servant's slumbers were sound ; the master's full of fleeting indistinct visions of rooms hung with black ; of rolling floods ; of marshes, in which huge toads and lizards were disporting themselves ; whilst Rose wailed—tossing her white arms on high—beside the dead body of her husband, upbraiding Singleton with his passive wickedness.

When Mr. Blenkins called next day, his first words were—

"Well ! they've found the body ; found it this morning in the bend of the river. I've been and broke it to Mrs. Brownlow, poor thing ! I doubt if she'll ever quite get over it !"

Here Mr. Blenkins sighed, scratched his nose, and was silent for awhile.

“ Mr. Goldup, you may go and take your dinner. Come up again as soon as you’ve done.”

These words of the Doctor’s dismissed the valet, and caused Singleton’s heart to die within him.

Mr. Blenkins took a chair, and sat himself down beside the bed; then, having inspected his patient, he proceeded thus to address him :—

“ There’ll have to be an inquest, sir; but you’ll be too ill to attend: we must take you down in writing; the coroner will see to that. I suppose you’re aware that you’re a murderer, to all intents and purposes. I heard the dogs making a noise as I left Andrew’s cottage, and I looked over the hedge and saw you looking on in that cowardly way. I expected you to help him: it took my breath away when the poor fellow fell! You always were a coward; and always will be to the end of the chapter.”

Singleton groaned.

“ It’s no use groaning. You must be aware that you’re quite in my power. I can tell what I saw, and disgrace you.”

Singleton, starting up in the bed, seized the doctor’s arm, crying out—“ Say nothing, and you shall have the half of all I possess!”

Mr. Blenkins shook him off roughly, and said—“ Lie down, and cover yourself up, sir. You deserve hanging as much as any rogue who ever swung at the Old Bailey.”

“ Have mercy on me!”

“ Why did you *murder* Edgar Brownlow? You murdered him, just as much as though you had shed his blood! What harm had he done you? There was not a better fellow in the world than that young man. Why did you murder him, eh?”

Singleton ground his teeth.

“What reparation can you make for your crime? Let’s hear!”

“Do not torture me so!”

“Can you bring him to life again, and stop his wife’s sorrow? There she sits with dry, staring eyes, rocking herself to and fro; and moaning enough to break a man’s heart. *That* is your doing! Suppose, sir, she goes out of her mind: whose doing will that be, eh?”

As Mr. Blenkins spoke, he kept his eyes fixed on the ceiling, never once looking at Singleton.

“Have mercy on me!” cried Richard, faintly.

“Where was *your* mercy when your friend begged you to help him, and you refused?”

“Shall you then speak, and give me over to disgrace?”

Singleton seized the surgeon’s arm. The sweat streamed down his livid face, as he begged for life; offering all his wealth to the impracticable doctor.

“Keep your money, sir; and take your hands off my arm. If I accepted so much as a farthing from you, I should look upon myself to be as bad as you are. I’m an honest man, and an honest man I mean to remain.”

“Then I am lost!”

“I shall not speak, sir; but you will live with the knowledge that you are in my power; and with the perpetual remembrance that you are a *murderer*. I shall call on you from time to time, that you may not forget me!”

Singleton sank back exhausted in his bed; and the doctor rang the bell for Mr. Goldup, who speedily appeared.

“You’ll take great care of the young gentleman, Mr. Goldup: we can’t spare him yet!”

“To be sure, Dr. Blinkins! We’ve the wedding to come off with that *gim* of a young lady, Miss Isabella Lund; it would never do for Mr. Singleton to give us the slip yet awhile; would it, sir?”

Mr. Blenkins grinned a ghastly grin ; put on his hat, and left the room.

Singleton, aching, sick, and faint, turned his face to the wall, when Mr. Blenkins left him.

At that very time yesterday, he thought, Brownlow was alive, happy, and smiling ; now, he was dead and cold. " Why did I not save him ? " he asked himself, groaning in his spirit.

Poor, wretched Singleton ! Envy, and paltry vanity, had given birth to disproportionate anger ; and that ungoverned anger had pushed him on. Who can tell to what lengths neglected, wild-running passions may not lead a man ? Singleton knew not the strength of the hatred that led him. He felt that remorse was too heavy for his soul to bear. Singleton was timid : his passions, although strong, were mean and small. His ill deed had been the venting of pent-up feelings of mortified vanity, and gnawing envy. Even as he refused his help he did not desire Brownlow's death. If he had been told in the morning, that before the sun set he should have suffered his friend to perish, he would not have believed the prophecy.

Singleton shuddered when he thought of Mr. Blenkins' power over him. Through his father's misdeeds he was under the claw of Mahomet ; through his own he was under that of the surgeon. His soul revolted in vain at the idea of such thralldom ; fuming and desponding, and looking in vain for help. Help there was none ! So long as Mahomet and Mr. Blenkins lived, he must remain in their power.

Wearily passed the days and nights, as Singleton restlessly tossed in his bed ; dreading to ask anything concerning Brownlow, yet greedily listening to the scraps of news which Mr. Goldup brought him on the subject.

" Mr. Brownlow's uncle arrived at Warton in this very

ho-tel, sir ; indeed they brought poor Mr. Brownlow here, but I thought it best not to name it," said Mr. Goldup.

Old Mr. Brownlow had caused the body to be removed to the family vault ; and a week after, Rose, with her mother and sister, had returned sad and heart-broken to her own home.

Janet's happiness was obscured, not only by the death of Brownlow and Rose's misery, but by the idea of Richard's sorrow for his friend. She painted his sensitive mind grieving over the loss of Brownlow ; and she imagined that his illness was aggravated by his unhappiness.

For days and nights after Brownlow's death, Rose had sat on a low seat rocking herself backwards and forwards, and piteously moaning ; her wild and tearless eyes fixed and staring, insensible to all things, even to the soothing kindness of Mrs. Adams and Janet.

Mr. Blenkins was in despair. He had known Rose from her infancy, and entertained the greatest affection for her.

"It will never do to let her go on so !" he said, shaking his head, and sighing deeply. One morning he arrived early at Mrs. Adams'

"Gad ! ma'am, I believe I've hit it at last," he said, taking a folded paper from his very large waistcoat pocket. "Where's Mrs. Brownlow ?"

The doctor was conducted to Rose ; who, pale and haggard, looking wild and frightened, noticed him not.

"There's something for you !"

With these words, Mr. Blenkins threw the paper he held into Rose's lap.

"Open it," he continued : "it's from your husband !"

Rose languidly opened the paper ; a dark brown, glossy lock of hair fell from it. On beholding it she uttered a faint cry ; kissed it a thousand times ; the pent-up tears rained

from her burning eyes, and she threw herself sobbing into her mother's arms.

"She'll do now! God bless you all!" cried Mr. Blenkins, leaving the room; and rubbing his eyes with the glove he held in his hand.



## CHAPTER XX.

### REMORSE.

WHEN Singleton returned to his own home, he was weak in body and shaken in mind. The first thing he perceived on entering the hall was a pair of gloves which Brownlow had taken from his pocket and thrown on the table, as he and Richard had left the house together. Singleton turned his head from this relic of his friend, as though he had seen a spectre.

Everything about him served to remind him of Brownlow. His eyes fell upon books which Brownlow had read; pictures which Brownlow had admired; seats on which he had sat; views which had pleased him; and many other objects which perpetually served to bring him to Singleton's mind. At night Singleton's dreams were all of Brownlow. His sleeping fancy painted Brownlow clinging to the bank; he could see him fall over, breaking through shrubs and briars; could behold the splashing water closing over him; could hear poor, faithful Nelly's bark of agony, as he fell. Then he would start from his slumbers, crying, "It was only a dream!" waking to find that that dream had been an image of a reality which sat on his sick soul like an incubus: a reality which could neither be done away with, nor washed from his memory. He was listless, fearful, and mournful; sitting brooding over his crime; dreading lest

the surgeon, who knew his secret, should one day give him over to infamy.

The Lunds, who had not heard from him for some time, began to fear that all was not well; wherefore, Mat, volunteering to reconnoitre, started on the expedition, and suddenly appeared at Singleton Hall.

"My dear Singleton," cried Lund, "I know you do not expect a brother to stand on ceremony. The fact is, that poor Isabelle is so anxious about you that it begins to tell on her health; and nothing would do but I must set off, see you myself, and let her know all about you. That poor girl's devotion for you surpasses anything I ever saw!" Lund knew too well what he was about to look surprised at the alteration he saw in Singleton, who appeared ten years older than when Mat had last parted with him. His cheeks were hollow and sallow; there were a few wrinkles round his mouth; his eyes looked preternaturally large, dark, and gleaming, wandering restlessly, and falling beneath the gaze of others.

"What the devil's the matter with him?" inquired Mr. Matthew Lund of himself; on finding that Singleton was absent, melancholy, and not stirred, as he had been of old, by Mat's flattery and obsequiousness.

Mat proposed that Singleton should return with him, saying, "The air of the Downs will set you up in a jiffy; Isabelle shall nurse you, and the wedding will come off in no time."

Singleton shook his head, but said nothing. He felt that to encounter the boisterous Lunds was beyond his present strength; he even ardently wished for the departure of Mat, that he might again be alone, unwatched by mortal eye.

Mat was not able to send a very satisfactory account of Singleton to the "honest" Captain and his fair daughters. He informed them that "Manfred the Corsair" was, as he

was pleased to express it, "as cross as a bear with a sore head;" that he was entirely changed; that he sat "mum-chance," staring at the fire and biting the tip of his thumb; that even the mention of his poems and romance failed to rouse him; that he never spoke of the intended alliance with Tee: in fact, that he never spoke at all unless spoken to, and that he then answered as shortly as possible. Mat concluded by saying, "He was always a spoony; and I suppose he can't get over the ugly sight of Brownlow's tumble off the cliff. However, it won't do to let him and his property slip through our fingers; and if he don't take to marrying kindly, we must bully him into it in some way. When once we've got him, he may mope away till he's black in the face, whilst Tee and all of us make the feather's fly."

Mr. Matthew Lund was a cunning man; but even cunning men will sometimes be guilty of oversights. He wrote the above letter at Singleton's table, drying it on a new sheet of blotting paper; then sealing it, and depositing it in the letter box, hurried off to call on the Fotheringays, leaving Richard to add to the poem he had in hand—the receptacle into which he poured his misery.

As Singleton leant on his hand, his eyes rested on the blotting-paper before him. Suddenly he caught sight of a word in Lund's great black writing, a word which looked like "Brownlow." The blood flew to his pale face; he seized the paper, and held it to the glass, in which he distinctly read the above remarks of his friend, his valued friend, Matthew Lund. Three several times did he read them over. Was it possible? Could Lund so write of him: Lund, who seemed all friendship and kindness? "Tee," he concluded, meant Isabelle. "Make the feathers fly;" "Bear with a sore head!" "Manfred the Corsair!" Had Lund written of *him* after that fashion? Again and again he held the paper before the glass; again



and again he read the firmly written words. There they were : fixed, immovable witnesses of the treachery of Lund and his kin.

Singleton sank back in his chair furious, yet grieving ; furious at Mat's remarks and perfidy ; grieving over the discovery that he was not loved, as he thought he was, by the Lunds. He did not perceive that his vanity had led him into their snares ; he blamed them, never dreaming that his folly might deserve blame, as well as their rascality.

"Let me tempt you out, my dear Singleton : it is a lovely afternoon ; a turn about the grounds will do you good. You really confine yourself too much to the house. Isabelle must write to you, and scold you a little : I am sure you could not resist *her*, dear girl."

Thus spoke Mat Lund, fawningly ; as he returned from his walk.

Singleton arose from his chair ; seized Lund by the collar ; dragged him to the glass, and held the paper before it ; fixing his fiery eyes on his false friend, and saying savagely—"Read that, you double-faced wretch !"

Lund began reading the fatal words. In an instant he saw what he had done. He was mute with vexation and confusion ; his face livid and blue-tipped with sudden agitation. He could not deny that he had written the lines that confronted him in the glass ; he knew not what to do ; he felt like the unmasked, mean villain that he was.

Singleton withdrew his hand from Lund's collar ; saying, as he angrily threw the paper in the fire—"Leave my house this instant ; and never more appear before me. I now see how you have duped me : as for your sister, she shall never be my wife ! Go !"

Matthew Lund meanly sneaked from the room, packed his portmanteau, and left Singleton Hall the back way ; bending his steps to a public-house on the high road ; from

which he took his departure by coach on the following morning.

It may be imagined with what shrieks of dismay his account of his oversight was received by Isabelle and her sisters. Mat called himself oaf, fool, simpleton, ninny—everything but knave. The Captain whistled through his teeth; and Isabelle rated her brother for being “such a blind, stupid goose.”

“I don’t mean to return his presents, though,” she said: “diamonds and pearls are not to be had every day. How *could* you be so silly, Mat? We shall never trust to *you* again! Such a splendid match! Oh, dear! I meant to have made the feathers fly; and to have astonished little Dickie’s weak mind. Never set up for a clever fellow again, Mat, after what you’ve done.”

“Don’t keep on so, Tee; bore, bore, bore! Just like a woman: they always kick a man when he’s down. If you’ll hold your tongues, all of you, I’ll show you our next move!”

The members of the family having held their tongues, as requested by Mat, he again spoke, saying:—“Threaten him with an action for breach of promise of marriage, to be sure! He’ll kick at that, like the very devil! I know him: he’ll wince again, at the idea of his love-letters being read in court; he’ll shrivel up like an old walnut at the bare thought of being held up to public ridicule. *There* we have him; we’ll make him buy himself off: he don’t care a fig about money; and I’ll undertake to bleed him.”

Loud applause followed this scheme of Mat’s—applause shrill and vociferous from the ladies, deep and grunting from the Captain; Mat grinning in rascally guise as his father complimented him with, “Mat, my boy, you’re a trump!”

A letter having been composed by Mat, and duly copied

out by the Captain, whose work it was supposed to be, was signed, sealed, and in due time delivered to Singleton. This letter informed him of the legal steps about to be taken by old Lund on behalf of his daughter.

The idea of such a proceeding had not before presented itself to Singleton's brooding mind. That the man he had looked upon as having a paternal affection for *him*, should thus turn upon him, filled him with mingled feelings of sadness and anger.

Mat was right when he had said that Singleton would not bear the thought of appearing in a ridiculous suit—of having his love-letters, the outpourings of his inmost soul, real aloud in court; to be laughed at, and made sport of, by the multitude assembled. His ~~vanity~~ <sup>pride</sup> shivered and shrank at the bare idea of such a thing. It must not be: it should not be.

Singleton wrote a short and dry answer to the Captain's letter, offering him a thousand pounds to compromise matters. To this epistle arrived an answer from old Lund, beginning, "Sir,—For what do you take me?" and giving it as the Captain's ultimatum that he could not dream of letting off "so dishonourable a fellow as *you*" under the sum of five thousand pounds.

Singleton, not caring for pelf, and being anxious to wash his hands of his late friends, made no stand against old Lund's extortion. He sent him a cheque for the sum he had named, and then sat down to mourn over himself and his "dark destiny."

He now found himself without a friend in the wide world! Of acquaintances he had plenty; but look where he would, he had not one friend: no one in whom to confide; no one to love him; no one to love! He thought not on Janet. She had been an amusement to him—a pastime—but he knew not how she loved him. With her

he might have found true affection and happiness. He overlooked the only heart on earth that loved him—the heart of which he had made a diversion in idle hours of vanity.

The discovery he had made of the Lunds' perfidy and double dealing threw him back on himself; turning his mind against his kind, and darkening his views of human nature. He looked not within for the cause of his griefs. Would he ever do so?—would he ever learn to search his own heart, or look with clear sight on his own ways?

The recollection of Brownlow still weighed Singleton to the earth. To add to the bitterness of his woe, he began to have a glimmering idea that Brownlow had really been his friend—that Brownlow had really loved him. The idea became more and more distinct; memory bringing forth from her deep, dark stores, instances of Brownlow's simple, unaffected kindness and goodwill towards Singleton.

"Why did I so hate him?" Singleton asked himself; but poor, blind Singleton could not answer his own question!

To horror for his crime was now added a vain mourning for his friend, and a remorse which knew no comfort. Oh, horrible state! To quake and grieve over a deed which no power could undo; by day, by night, to feel that the true love of a friend had been quenched in death by his own act!

Singleton sought a refuge in the London world from his gnawing thoughts; but he found that no wordly gaiety and turmoil were able to still his mind.

He now took no interest in ladies' smiles and delicate flattery: their admiration and love could not take the remorseful sorrow from his soul. He began, too, to suspect that whoever spoke kindly to him, or sought him, had some design on him for their own ends. He grew cold

beneath fostering kindness ; severe and cynical towards those who would have stretched forth a friendly hand to him. Women he more especially suspected and dreaded. Perhaps the treatment he had met with from Almeria, and Theresa Lund, might justify in some degree his suspicions. He should have distinguished, and have considered that all women were not, as a matter of course, Almerias and Theresas.

Singleton met Lund diligently haunting dowagers, card-tables, and dinner-parties. Mat had the coolness to walk up to him, as of yore, with a smile. Singleton turned on his heel contemptuously. Lund spread abroad the manner in which Singleton had behaved to Theresa ; winning her love, and then giving her up ; adding, that fearing an action, he had had the baseness to offer a large sum as a compromise to the injured family. The world greedily listened to this tale ; and Singleton was looked upon with contempt.

His drama, a work of forty or fifty pages, was now making a sensation. It was dark, mystical, full of infidel and despairing sentiments ; bold with all the boldness of blind and blasphemous folly : a work to be viewed with delight by demons ; a work to be grieved over by angels.

Singleton once more retired to his lone home.

The gaze of the world was too much for his shaken nerves. If the least approach to the subject of accidental death was made in his presence, he felt the blood stealing to his guilty face ; his hand trembling ; his temples throbbing ; and his heart sickening. Solitude, dreary and depressing, seemed to him to be a haven of rest, after mixing in a world with which he had ceased to have any affinity.

To the country then he retired ; but he carried his diseased mind and his undermining thoughts with him : let

him go where he would, there was no escape from the pitiless upbraidings of his conscience.

Oh! the restless tossing, the weary wandering, the anxious fear, the feverish repining, the fruitless remorse, of Singleton's bleak and infidel spirit. For him the worm had already began to gnaw—the flames to burn!

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Two years had passed away since Singleton had committed the deed which had ruined his peace, when the service companies of a British regiment landed at Portsmouth, after many years' duty in India.

From Portsmouth the regiment marched to Winchester; taking up its quarters in the Louis XIV.-looking house, built by his Majesty King Charles II., of jovial memory.

Shortly after, the junior Major, furnished with Horse-guard leave, mounted on to the box-seat of a swiftly flying stage coach; rejoicing his eyes with the sight of the green fields and swelling hills of old England, and filling his lungs with the air of her early autumn breeze—fresh, strengthening, and enlivening.

The Major was tall, stalwart, and strong of limb. His cheeks were burnt to a deep brown by the Indian sun; his hazel eye wore a mild and gentle look; the expression of his face was kind and sad, though firm and manly.

From early dawn till eventide he travelled; being set down in a quiet little village, ruddy with the rays of the evening sun, just as the church clock was sedately striking six; telling those who chose to hear the warning, that they were an hour nearer their final, everlasting doom of bliss or woe.

The Major, having given orders at the inn as to the destination of his portmanteau, set out from the village as one to whom the country was well known. He stopped from time to time looking about him as on familiar spots. Some-

times a smile lighted up his sad countenance ; sometimes a sigh heaved his broad chest.

After a two-mile walk across fields, he turned down a shady lane, which led him to the back entrance of a large and massive red brick house, of the reign of Queen Anne. A huge dog, chained to his box, and surrounded by various well-picked bones, barked in loud and sonorous tones, as the stranger, quickly passing him, sought the front of the house. The Major stood for an instant looking on the wide view, stretching off for miles at the foot of the hill on which the mansion was built, then entering the garden, he swiftly sped up the stone steps of the house, passed through the hall, gently opened the drawing-room door, and stood within that well-known apartment. The setting sun sent a burst of red light into the large and lofty room. The Major looked around him : he beheld not those he had expected to see. At the farther end of the room a lady sat leaning her cheek on her hand ; watching a little child who was playing at her feet. She was young ; her face was pale and sad ; her meek blue eyes were surrounded by a faint circle of lilac ; her small, delicate features looked pinched and worn ; and there was a gentle, patient air over face and figure, which said that she still suffered, but that a heavenly hope consoled her.

The Major, stepping forward from the darker part of the room, caused the lady languidly to raise her head. She started ; her pale cheek reddened ; her eyes filled with tears, as she stretched forth her arms towards him, crying in a voice half full of joy and half of fear, "Edgar !"

The Major stopped, fixing his eyes on hers. He shook his head mournfully in answer to her cry ; then going up to her, and taking her small thin hand in his, he said gently, "Rose ? Are you Rose ?"

Poor Rose's answer was a faint "Yes !" Her hand

remained an instant in the Major's; his hand felt so like Brownlow's, as the soldier kindly held hers, that her tears began silently to fall.

"You are so like him : for a moment I thought and hoped you were his spirit."

To these words of Rose's the Major replied by informing her that he was always said to be the "double" of his poor cousin Edgar.

"You are, then, Harry ; the godfather of our boy ?"

"I am : just arrived from India with my corps ; and come over here to surprise my father and mother, with whom I suppose you are staying."

Harry Brownlow had rightly guessed. Rose, and Harry, her beloved boy, were on a visit to the Major's father and mother : a hale and stalwart old English gentleman, rosy-cheeked and white-haired ; who with his little, delicate, gentle wife, loved Rose ; both doing all in their power to soften her grief.

These two old people were dining out when their son so suddenly appeared in the home of his childhood ; wherefore the Major and Rose passed the evening together.

Rose's eyes were ever and anon fixed on Harry Brownlow, with a fond and timid look, so full of grief and sadness that it went to his very soul. He, as well as Rose, knew the weary sorrow of a wounded heart. He had married, in India, a woman he adored, and who deserved his love. A few months after their marriage she had died of fever. Since that time he had found nought to fill his heart or to console it.

Harry Brownlow, from his own feelings, could understand Rose's ; and he, kind, compassionate, and gentle, could not endure to think that a fragile, tender being like Rose, should from day to day feel the sickening sorrow which his manly spirit had found it hard to bear.



There was a joyous meeting between Harry and his father and mother ; Rose drinking in the sound of his voice, and feeding on his looks and movements, unseen by him—they were so like the voice, the looks, and the movements of her husband.

It became the object of Harry Brownlow's life to try and remove the weight of woe from Rose's heart. If he could make her smile, or bring a faint ray of joy from her eyes, he rejoiced. His kind breast was lightened of some part of his own grief, when he thought that she felt less sad.

From pitying Rose, and attempting to console her, the Major began to love her ; his heart began again to open to hope ; and the clouds of sorrow to vanish away.

Weary of soldiering, longing for a peaceful home, he retired from the army ; giving up all his time to the furthering of his views on Rose.

Before Rose was aware of what was passing in her heart, that heart—led on by Harry Brownlow's likeness to Edgar, and by his gentle kindness—began to love him. Those two became to her one and the same man. About the Major, however, there was a tinge of melancholy which Brownlow had not ; but which, in Rose's sadness, made her love him the more.

Harry having told Rose the history of all his griefs, smote her tender heart with a great pity for him.

When he told her this story of his love, they were sitting one sunny morning beneath a tree in the park, in which the old-fashioned house stood. The country was coloured with the tender green of spring ; the perfume of violets scented the air ; the balmy breeze gently stirred the leaves of trees and shrubs ; the meadows were yellow with spring flowers ; young lambs bleating, frisking, and playing ; the birds making a concert such as can only be made by joyous birds in the warm spring time.

"Rose, you and I have suffered alike," said Harry Brownlow, softly; and Rose felt a fond arm passed round her waist.

She sighed, but answered not. At that moment sorrow seemed suddenly to leave her: she felt as though Edgar sat beside her.

"Will you be mine for life, Rose?" inquired Harry, after a long pause.

What was Rose's answer? Was it "Yes," or was it "No?"

About six weeks after that morning, Harry Brownlow and Rose were married. It may therefore be inferred what Rose's answer had been to Harry Brownlow.

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One after another Singleton discharged his household: Mr. Goldup and a woman alone remaining at the Hall. He had likewise entirely given up all society; his shattered nerves could not endure the eye of man: he ever expecting that his crime would be found out from the confusion of his countenance. Although he fled from his fellows and buried himself in solitude, that solitude brought him no peace. Alone with one horrible idea, he lived a life of torment: a life he would fain have quitted, yet dared not. The thoughts of heaven and hell implanted in his childish mind by poor old Jenny, long since gone to rest in peace, arose in his memory, bringing yet more torture to his impious soul. It became his endeavour to stifle such thoughts. All the infidel literature of France and England he greedily devoured, until he nearly believed that there could be no hereafter. He *nearly* believed it, imagining and persuading himself that he really did believe that impossible fable: that fool's glorification of "pure reason;" that lie which, let his words be ever so bold and scoffing, no man ever believed in the

secret depths of his heart. The very devils believe and tremble !

Singleton was soon to be quite alone.

Mr. Goldup, having placed breakfast before him one morning, cleared his throat, bowed, and thus bespoke his master :—

“ You’ll excuse me, sir, I’m sure, as it’s not till after mature deliberation that I made up my mind to inform you of what has reached my ears.”

At these words, Singleton began to tremble : his guilty conscience whispering that the valet’s information in some way concerned *him*.

“ What is it ? Go on,” he cried, casting down his eyes, and resting his forehead in the palm of his hand.

“ Why, sir, I had it on the best authority, I assure you. Dr. Blinkins saw the deceased himself, and told me that . . . ”

“ What ? What are you saying ? ” interrupted Singleton, rising from his chair, and pacing to and fro, his chin resting on his breast. “ Speak out ! ”

“ Well then, sir, to make a long story short, the lan’ord of the Duck is no more. The business is to be disposed of; and with your approbation, sir, I feel vastly inclined to compete for it ! ”

Singleton sighed deeply, as though some weight had been taken off his mind.

“ Do as you like,” he said ; “ but don’t bore me about it.”

“ Bless my soul, sir, how like you said that to my late respected master ! ”

“ Leave me ! Go ! ”

“ I beg your parding, sir, but I must submit to you that without your kind assistance it will be utterly impossible for me to launch myself in business.”

“ You shall have a year’s wages. Now leave the room ! ”

“A year’s wages, sir? A mere flea-bite! You will observe, sir, and I speak it with due humility, I have been the very moral of fidelity to my late master, and more especially to you, sir. Ah, sir! if you *did* but know, you would think no treasure too great for my *desarts*!”

“Leave me to myself! You shall have your year’s wages: not a farthing more or less. My purse shall *not* be at every rascal’s beck and call!”

“Why, you see, sir, the fact is, that having had the privilege of being privy to a conversation between you and Mr. May’met, and another between you and Dr. Blinkins at the Duck, and having kept them two *stoopendous* secrets as though they were buried in oblivion, I *did* think, sir, that some little reward of merit would not be totally misplaced; and the Duck is doing such a fine business in posting, &c., and I am so well known and respected in the neighbourhood, that—”

“You shall have all you wish,” interrupted Singleton, gasping, and waving his hand impatiently towards the valet. “But promise me—swear to me that you will never betray me! I am in your power: spare me! have mercy on me!”

Goldup swore a thousand oaths that his master should never be by him betrayed; that Mahomet and Mr. Blenkins were not aware that he was in possession of such awful secrets: neither were they.

Mr. Goldup had gleaned his information by his old listening-at-the-door manœuvre, had carefully bottled it up for future use; and now brought it forth in furtherance of his schemes of fortune and success. The valet, by means of his master’s gold, was duly installed as owner of the “Duck Inn and Family Hotel;” and a more active, obsequious, civil, obliging, and rascally landlord than Mr. Goldup, was not to be found in the three kingdoms.

The idea of being at the mercy of a servant—that a

servant had power over him—yet further subdued Singleton's already depressed spirit. The valet had sworn never to betray him. What were oaths? Singleton believed not in their power; and he felt sure that his late servant did not. He knew that he had become Goldup's slave, as he had become Mahomet's. Both of them made no scruple of drawing largely on him for money whenever their schemes required it; and Singleton—vain, independent, self-willed Singleton—was obliged to bow to their will.

The woman servant would not remain in the vast mansion after Mr. Goldup's departure: she, too, left; and Singleton found it impossible to persuade any one to take up their abode in the large, silent, dreary old Hall: a building which all firmly believed to be haunted.

Singleton Hall, in time, wore the very air of a cursed and haunted dwelling. The shutters were never opened, except in Singleton's two rooms; panes of glass, which had been broken by a hail-storm, were never replaced by others; the door and the window-frames looked dirty and neglected for lack of paint; the grass sprouted up between the stones of the terrace which surrounded three sides of the house; whilst the statues and balustrade which ornamented this terrace were green with damp, and gray with lichen. The vine which had been trained up one side of the Hall grew wild and straggling; the roses which had climbed over the porch grew as wildly as the vine. The stables were deserted and falling into decay; the stable clock was no more heard: it pointed to half-past twelve, at which hour it had stopped one burning summer's day. Within the coach-house, the key of which was lost, the nabob's grand carriages, covered with dust, the linings moth-eaten, were going to ruin. Singleton's "drag," the pride of other days, and the chariot which was to have borne him on his wedding tour, shared the same fate. The dinner-bell, which played such a part

in the nabob's time, now hung loose and rusty—silent, too, save when the roaring winter gales rudely blowing against it caused it to send forth a mournful, dreary sound.

The grounds were as neglected as the Hall: the once trim drive was covered with grass and weeds; the lawn and flower borders were a dank wilderness. On some of the trees might still be seen Ambrosia's initial, and the heart, cut on them by Singleton in his boyish days, and now looked on by him with a sigh of regret. The lodge gates, rusty and moss-grown, were opened but three or four times a year, to give entrance to Mr. Blenkins, as he drove up to the Hall, startling the rooks.

The inside of the house was as desolate as desolate could be.

The rich owner lived in the very room in which old Jenny had so hospitably received him, when, cold and tired, he first arrived at his paternal home.

It was now fitted up as a library, smelling of Russian leather in aristocratic guise. Next to this room was his bed-chamber. The rest of the house was locked up and deserted, save the huge kitchen—once full of servants, and echoing to the sound of tongues, now the abode of one solitary charwoman, who quitted it at dusk for her own cot in the village; hurrying off without looking to the right or to the left, fearful lest some ghastly sight should meet her eyes.

At night Singleton remained alone with his misery; the only human being in that lone house. In the rooms around him, the furniture wherewith he had furnished it for his bride, was covered with dust, standing in darkness by day and by night.

Diligent spiders spun many a web in the deserted apartments, undisturbed by busy brooms. In the nabob's bed-chamber, the dark mark of blood still stained the boards;

his hookah, once in daily use, stood dust-covered in a corner.

House and grounds were a type of Singleton's mind; neglected, desolate, becoming more ruinous from day to day.

The mind cannot be sick and sad, full of fears and remorse, without affecting the body. Singleton's delicate sensitive body was sorely shaken by his mind; his mind affected by his unstrung nerves.

Let him turn his eyes whither he would; let him close them; let him cover them with his thin and trembling hands; it mattered not: by night, by day, he ever saw before him Brownlow's pale upturned face.

If he went abroad, it was there; if he came into his home again, it was there; if he opened his eyes in the darkness of night, it was there; if he looked towards heaven in the blazing sunshine, it was there also.

Harassed by the spectre, he implored the surgeon to listen to his misery.

He was told that it was a figment of his brain; the effect of a sickly mind, and a morbidly nervous body. Singleton tried to reason himself out of the power of the spectre. Reason was of no avail. There before his eye remained the shadowy ghastly face; so still, so fixed, so lifeless!

It was noised abroad that Richard Singleton was mad. Some said that his mind had been overturned by Almeria's falseness; others that his father's suicide had crazed his brain; the villagers opined that he had "seen something" which had "blasted" him: all, however, agreed in saying that he was mad. To inquiries made of *him*, Mr. Blenkins only answered that Mr. Singleton was very nervous and fanciful.

These reports were listened to with agony by Janet. Once only had she seen Singleton since Brownlow's death.

On a cold bleak day in the beginning of winter, three or

four years after Brownlow died, Janet, on an errand of charity, had struck across the lower end of Singleton's grounds, along a path by which the Adams' had always been allowed to pass. She gathered her scarlet cloak about her, and hurried on, full of sad thoughts. She had gained the end of the path, and was about to enter a shrubbery, tangled and overgrown, when Singleton stood before her. His eyes were cast down; his head hung on his breast; he carried his hands behind him.

"Richard!" cried Janet, feebly.

He raised his eyes, his gleaming bloodshot eyes, angrily to hers, and passed on quickly without uttering a word.

Janet watched him, until he disappeared from her sight.

The rushing tears streamed from her eyes; she trembled in every limb.

"Alas!" she cried, "it is too true! He is lost, for ever lost!"

His burning eyes: his sunken, sallow cheeks; his long dishevelled hair; his meagreness; the feebleness of his gait; all smote Janet with sorrow and despair.

"He is dying," she thought; "dying of grief for the loss of his friend, with no one to console him—no one to be kind to him!"

Mrs. Adams, at Janet's entreaty, went to the Hall to visit Singleton, and to carry comfort to him. Singleton refused to see her; and begged, through Mr. Blenkins, that she would not call again.

"It's no use, my good lady," said the surgeon, gravely. "You can do him no good; neither can I. He's past cure; he must have his own way. He's no one over him; he *will* do as he likes, and we can't prevent it!"

Janet could hardly keep up an outward show of calmness, so smitten with sorrow was she for the friend of her youth, her only love. Duty, stern duty, and religion lent their



aid to bear her on, in the rugged way of grief and disappointment that lay before her.

Singleton sometimes thought with despair, how thrown away his life had been by the act of a moment ! The act of a moment ? That act was the offspring of years—of a life of self-indulgence in giving way to two of the meanest passions that can mislead the heart of man—to envy, and to vanity ! Thrown away his life was. He had fortune : what was wealth to him ? He had genius : could he exercise it ? He had talents : what made them so useless ? Had he a friend in the world ? Not one ! Was there one single being who cared whether he lived or died ? No ! He was solitary, uncared for, conscience-ridden, and forgotten.

At times he would roam about the grounds the live-long night, listening to the hooting owls, and the moaning wind ; talking to himself in whispers ; trying with his lean hands to push away the face, the ever-returning face of his friend. Then he would moan ; and lament aloud, amidst the sighing of the damp night breeze :—

“ I am a murderer ; the evil son of a vile murderer ; the descendant of a murderer ! My life is a burthen and dark : my days are bitter, my nights are wearisome ! Is there a hell ? Is there a hell ; or shall I go down to the grave, there to rot, and perish for ever ? Ah me ! ah me ! would that I were dead ! My misery is greater than I can bear. Always that face ! My eyes are weary of it ; my brain is tired, tired—so tired of that pale and mournful face ! My spirit faints within me. Shall I ever be at rest ? ”

By degrees, of all Singleton's friends none thought of him save Janet. Her heart, which to him had been but as a toy to a spoilt child, still turned fondly but sorrowfully towards him. No ray of hope shone in on the sad twilight of her soul ; yet she loved Richard ; mourning over the

wreck of so much genius, and grieving over his happiness for ever fled and gone.

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A year or two after her sudden meeting with Singleton, she was one morning strolling round the garden, when a little silvery voice bespoke her from on high.

“Will you throw up our ball, if you please?” quoth the little voice.

Janet, shading her eyes from the golden rays of a bright sun, looked up towards the speaker.

The wall which separated Mrs. Adams’ garden from the grounds of the next house, although it was some eight feet high on the garden side, measured but three on the opposite side. A terrace ran along that part of the wall, and on this terrace stood two little sisters, whom Janet beheld looking down on the garden, as they begged her to throw up their ball.

These two children were fair and delicate to view; clothed in deep mourning, and, as Janet opined, numbering but five and six years of age.

“Where is the ball, love?” inquired Janet.

“It has rolled under that rose-bush,” returned the eldest sister, pointing with her little white hand towards the spot.

The ball was thrown to the little girls.

“Thank you!—Stop a minute!”

They disappeared, reappeared, and each threw a blooming peach on the grass where Janet stood.

“There are some balls for *you*!” cried the little sisters laughing.

Janet thanked them; then inquired their names.

“Our name is Townsend. Sister is called Charlotte, and I am Janet,” replied the elder.

“Janet!—My name is Janet.”

“Then there are two Janets: a great Janet and a little Janet! My poor mamma’s name was Charlotte. Mamma is dead!—That is why we wear black frocks.”

The next day the little fair faces again looked over the wall, and the silvery voices called on Janet. Day by day the two sisters conversed with her from their terrace; and day by day Janet’s sad heart warmed towards them. Their innocent prattle diverted her thoughts from sorrowful musings: she looked forward with growing interest to her interviews with her pretty neighbours. Anon she invited them to come and see her birds and her flowers. Mrs. Adams, too, took an interest in the poor motherless children, who seemed to cling to her and Janet.

“Papa is very kind to us,” they said; “but nurse is very cross, and never plays with us.”

By the time spring returned, the little Townsends were on a very intimate footing at the cottage. Many a pleasant day had they spent there: many little gifts did they carry home; and greatly did their motherless love grow for Mrs. Adams, but more especially for Janet.

In due course, their father, Captain Townsend, called at the cottage, to thank the two ladies for their kindness to his children.

Captain Townsend was a sailor; brave, frank, manly; somewhat rough with men, but kind and gentle towards women. There was, however, nothing of flattery or fawning in his manner towards them: his kindness of manner sprang from the kindness of his heart. He had lost his wife about a year before he came to Warton, and his voice saddened and he sighed as he spoke of her. He had taken a large house, standing in wide-spreading grounds, next to the Adams’ cottage; as he required a thorough change of air and scene, and a country where he could indulge in hunting and shooting.

Captain Townsend's visits became very frequent at Mrs. Adams', until from being frequent they became daily.

Janet felt that *she* was the being to whom those visits were paid ; and Janet thought much and reasoned much with herself concerning the Captain, his little girls, and her own line of conduct.

She told herself, with checked tears, that Richard was to her as though he were dead. She told herself, likewise, that we are not to live for ourselves alone ; but that we are to help and comfort those who need us. She reflected that Singleton had been lost through want of a mother's care. " If he had been trained and watched over with care and tenderness," she thought, " his sensibility would have been regulated, his faults corrected, his talents turned to good account. He might have been happy ; what is he now ? "

The little Townsends seemed to Janet to have been placed in her path as objects for her love and care.

" Shall I," she inquired of herself, " turn coldy from them, to indulge in selfish grief over a hopeless love? Will my conscience acquit me if I push them from me—maybe to fall into the hands of one who would not care for them, or of one who would treat them with jealous harshness? I feel that I could try and be a good and obedient wife to their father that I could tend them with a mother's love and watchfulness. I will bury my love for Richard in the depths of my heart : I will do my duty, and I pray Heaven to help me and to lead me aright."

Janet did bury her love for Richard in the depths of her heart.

She received Captain Townsend's attentions calmly and gently ; and when he proposed, she frankly accepted him.

Janet never repented the step she had taken.

Her mother's happiness at seeing her so well married would have been reward enough. Added to this happiness

was much more. The kind and manly love of her husband, whom she learnt to adore ; the affection of the two little girls, between whom and her own children she made no difference ; the sense of delight which she felt as she trained their willing minds to all good ; the happiness she shed around her : all these things made up a felicity unto which she had never thought to attain.

She could, after a while, think on Richard with calmness and sorrowful pity. Her love for him had vanished ; her husband possessed her warm and generous heart.

Janet became the cheerful happy Janet of bygone days. She might sentimentally have pined herself into ill-health, and from ill-health into the grave. She had religion and sense enough to arouse herself from such selfish mourning. She put her trust in Heaven ; followed a better Guide than a weak human heart ; did her duty to others, setting her own feelings aside ; and, so acting, met with the reward of a quiet conscience, and the sweet delight of making happy, joyful hearts.

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Ten years of ever-growing misery had passed over Singleton's head since the day on which Brownlow had died.

One o'clock struck from the distant church steeple. The moon was shining down on earth from her highest point in heaven. Brown, russet, and yellow leaves clothed the trees ; a slight frost caused those stars which were farthest from the bright moon to glimmer clearly in the sky. It was the kind of night for fairies and elves to dance and run on smooth turf ; to skim through the cold air, hunting the heavy owl and flittering bat ; to rest on the topmost twigs of tall trees ; to chase cattle ; to knot horses' manes ; to sing high up—hundreds of feet up—in the clear, frosty sky.

The moon shone down on many things here below—on weal and on woe, on good and on harm ; and she shone down on a lone fishpond : on the trees that grew around it ; on the tangled weeds and briars that grew beside it ; on the tall flags that grew within it. She shone down upon opening water which closed again ; on widely-spreading circles that died away against the banks of the pond ; on gurgling bubbles that rose and burst ; on water stilled and sparkling beneath her beams.

The screech owl, in a hollow oak, rent the air with his funereal cry ; and still the moon shone on. And now she shone down upon a dead man's face, rising above the bosom of the water ; staring upon her with glazed and upturned eyes ; his long, black hair floating around his dusky, still, motionless face.

The sun shone down, ere long, in his turn, upon the lone fish-pond ; and the water lay calm beneath his rays. The owl's cry was mute, having given place to the cawing of the rooks, and the song of the redbreast ; and the sun shone down upon no dead man's cold face.

The church bell was solemnly tolling. Villagers in their Sunday best were gathered together in the churchyard ; a splendid funeral drew near through the winding lane. There were feathers, and velvet, and coal-black steeds ; there were coaches ; there was a long train of tenants on horseback ; there was a crowd of spectators ; but there was not in all that multitude one tearful eye, nor one sobbing breast.

In the church, the mouth of a vault was gaping wide. The clergyman read the burial service over a velvet covered coffin, on which the eyes of the throng who filled the church were fixed. The coffin was lowered into the dark, deep vault : and the crowd of mourners and spectators left the church.

“ Ah ! ” quoth an old man in a snow-white frock, to an

old red-cloaked dame, "it be all mighty well of Dr. Blenkins to say as the squire was too much afeard o' death to make away with hisself, and that he fell into the water in his night rambling: *I* don't believe a word on't, dame; do you?"

"Lor' bless 'ee, no, master! They was always an unfort'nit family, 'cos of the church property: none o' them as ever I *heerd* tell on died nat'ral, and 'taint likely as this un should. Well! he be gone to his long home: Heaven send he may rest in peace! But I wouldn't go nigh that unked pond after dark, not for all the goold that was told by the biggest miser as ever lived; that I wouldn't!"

"Nor I neither, dame! Do'ee know who's to have all his wealth, now he be gone where he can't use it?"

"Why, I *heerd* lawyer Small's man saying, when I was in at market yesterday, as it's all left to Squire Brownlow's little gentleman—Squire Brownlow as slipped off the cliff."

The old dame was right: little Harry Brownlow was heir to all the vast property and estates, left to him by remorseful Singleton.

A hatchment was put up over the door of Singleton Hall; causing the deserted old mansion to look more haunted and dreary than ever.

Richard Singleton slept with his forefathers. His sick and weary brain was at rest. Who can think, without awe and dread, of his impenitent and blasphemous soul?

THE END.







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